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ABSTRACT

This document, which was developed after an extensive literature review and study of the United Kingdom's labor market and job search methods, is intended to be a tool for Employment Service personnel assisting unemployed job seekers. First, the following aspects of the job search environment are considered: occupational labor markets and recruitment channels; the recruitment orientations of different types of employers; characteristics of unemployed job seekers and the psychological effects and problems of unemployment that may impinge on their job search behaviors; the institutional Employment Service framework and public policies in the United Kingdom; and international perspectives on the assisted job search. Next, a simple generic model of the job search process is presented that calls for the following three stages of actions by Employment Service personnel: initial advice and guidance; initial implementation of job search activity; maintenance and fine tuning of job search strategies; and review of job search procedures and job choices. Appended are the following: 93-item bibliography, list of experts consulted, discussion guide, research specification, and list of 54 reports about employment and the labor market in the United Kingdom. (MN)

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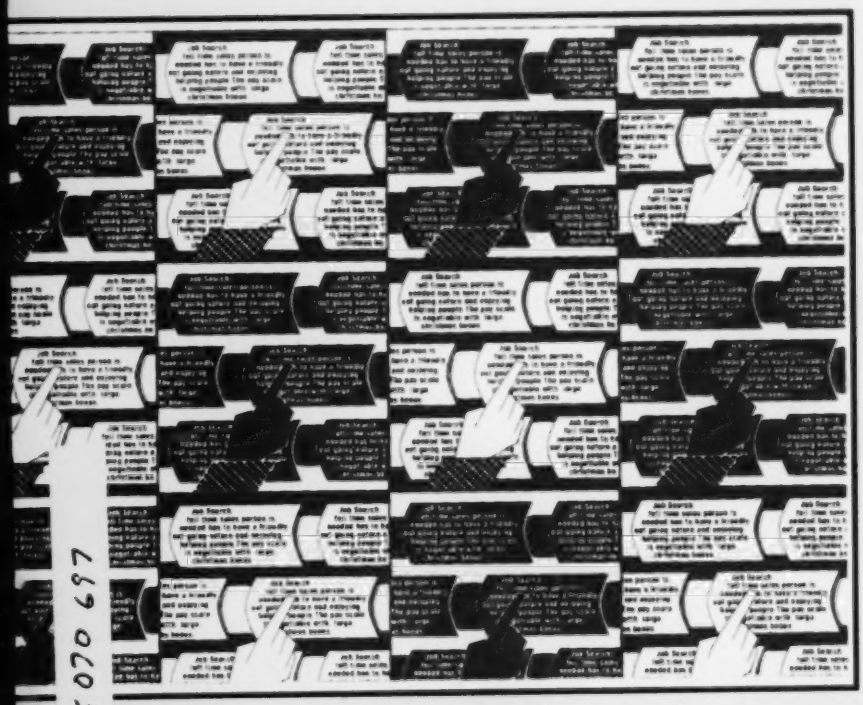

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INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

1. Introduction

This Commentary is written to assist the Employment Service in developing jobsearch models that can be used by Employment Service staff to improve the advice and guidance offered by the Employment Service to jobseekers, and in particular to devise practical 'Back to Work Plans' for unemployed jobseekers.

The Employment Service wishes to provide jobseekers with advice about their jobsearch activities, which will take into account changing labour market conditions, and reflect sectoral and occupational diversity. Such advice must be appropriate to individual cases, and so will be genuinely helpful to individuals looking for jobs. One of the outputs of such advice will take the form of a Back to Work Plan (BWP hereafter) which will be jointly agreed by the individual and the Employment Service. The BWP may form part of an implicit contract between Employment Service and the jobseeker. For this reason, the BWP should also be verifiable, so that the Employment Service can assess how far the individual is actively implementing it, and evaluate the usefulness of the steps suggested.

The Commentary was drafted to contribute to an Employment Service seminar on jobsearch models and is now revised for wider circulation and publication.

Research aims

The research on which the Commentary is based has four main aims:

- to collate and review existing research and experience in forming the notion of jobsearch. This should include both the jobseeker's and the employer's perspectives, and should reflect the diversity of the UK labour market;
- to develop a conceptual framework on which a common understanding of the jobsearch process can be built; on this basis,
- to develop an operational framework and guidelines, which together will provide the Employment Service with a practical basis for devising and implementing jobsearch, guidance and monitoring procedures; and
- to advise the Employment Service on appropriate means of field-testing and validating these.

Research methods

The research comprised four elements. The first was a thorough review of existing published and unpublished literature, relevant to issues of jobsearch procedures. The second and third elements were a series of expert interviews within the Employment Service itself, and among academic and other non-Employment Service researchers who have undertaken relevant work. Appendix 2 provides a listing of contributors to these discussions, to whom our thanks are due. Finally, IMS provided advice on the translation of these various data into a practical operational framework and guidelines for use by the Employment Service staff who provide jobsearch advice to claimants.

The authors would like to stress that the findings of this report are not based on new, primary research with Employment Service clients (neither jobseekers nor employers). They are based on secondary research methods and, as such, further validation may be needed. In addition, it should also be stressed that this report does not concentrate in particular on long-term unemployed jobseekers. Rather, the focus of the study is on jobsearch behaviour in general and how it can be improved.

Structure of this report

The remainder of this introductory section provides a summary of the evidence and discussion to be found in the report.

Section 2 presents an empirical and conceptual review of our existing knowledge about jobsearch procedures. It suggests that the jobsearch environment is made up of four components, which are discussed in turn. Chapter 2 looks at the recruitment and selection norms of occupational labour markets, which are developed as a result of the collective interaction of employers and jobseekers, and which feed back to inform their individual decisions. Chapter 3 looks separately at employers' individual procedures and preferences in recruitment and selection, while Chapter 4 considers unemployed jobseekers' individual approaches to finding employment. The fourth component is the effects of public agencies, both in their general labour market policies and in their direct intervention. Section two concludes with a review of public programmes and schemes which directly influence jobseeking behaviour in the UK (Chapter 5), and in other developed economies (Chapter 6).

Section 3 presents the authors' attempts to synthesize this material, and address it to the Employment Service's policy need for an operational framework and guidelines for devising and implementing jobsearch guidance and monitoring procedures. The section begins by addressing the scale of tangible net benefits from investing in enhanced jobsearch. It goes on to identify some common deficiencies in claimants' jobsearch skills, and to identify groups of jobseekers who might be particularly at risk.

Moving on to consider a positive model of jobsearch, eight generic characteristics of successful jobsearching are identified, and a simple model of jobsearch embodying them is produced. The section concludes with a discussion of the key issues affecting the Employment Service role in enhancing jobsearch, namely timing, selection, resources and interaction with the benefit regime.

Appendix 1 provides a bibliography of published and unpublished research on jobsearch issues.

Appendix 2 provides a list of experts interviewed as part of this research.

Appendix 3 provides the discussion guide used to structure the discussions.

Appendix 4 provides the research specification.

Appendix 5 provides a list of other material produced under the Commentary remit.

Summary of main findings

Understanding the jobsearch environment (section 2)

Four main elements are identified which directly combine and interact with each other in determining the success of individuals' jobsearch activities.

1. The recruitment conventions of particular occupational labour markets

Labour markets have a tendency towards convergence upon particular and distinctive recruitment norms, which serve to improve the process bringing employer and jobseeker together. They also, by implication, disadvantage the uninitiated, particularly the inexperienced, unthinking or otherwise disenfranchised, jobseeker.

Key explanatory features of these norms are: (a) the widespread use of multiple recruitment channels; (b) although combinations of method used vary from employer to employer, and from time to time, crucially they tend to cluster by occupation; (c) employers' choice of methods used is sensitive to the tightness of the labour market, with an evident shift towards more, more formal, and more expensive methods under tighter supply conditions; and finally, (d) despite all the clustering, there is considerable overlap and a high incidence of 'atypical' methods used.

Two important implications for jobsearch procedures are: (a) the extent to which many employers simultaneously use multiple recruitment channels for a given vacancy, then jobseekers could beneficially be advised and encouraged to pursue multiple methods

of jobsearch themselves; and (b) the extent to which the individual jobseeker has some particular notion of the kind of job he/she is seeking, then the occupational clustering can give some guidance as to the relative emphasis which he/she ought to give to each particular channel.

2. Employer-specific considerations and the jobsearch environment

Employers do not generally blindly follow the norms of occupational labour markets. The most important influences on employers' preferences within occupational labour markets are (a) the relative competitive strength of the organisation in the labour market, and (b) the extent to which it exhibits a strong personnel policy consciously designed to meet particular corporate ends.

Where both these factors are evident, we observe a high level of both stability and formality in both recruitment and selection. Where both are weak, we correspondingly observe informality and pragmatism. A model is developed, based on four possible permutations of these two factors, distinguishing between four ideal types which can be used to label and distinguish between four distinct types of recruitment orientation.

The basic orientation towards recruitment and selection is established by the particular combination of these two sets of factors, but other factors are identified which act to influence and condition this basic orientation. Among them the strength of occupationally-specific conventions in the external labour market and, internally, the relative strength of the personnel and line management functions in the recruitment process, are seen to be most important. Establishment size and the organisational structure of the recruiting organisation are also important. The nature of the recruitment exercise (*eg* replacement or mass recruitment for a new site) also has an independent and moderating effect. Sectoral considerations in isolation are thought to offer little explanatory power, but have some use as shorthand indicators of common groupings of the other variables identified.

An important implication for jobsearch procedures is that to the extent that it is targeted on particular employers, jobseekers need to understand and tailor their approaches to meet the expectations of that particular employer. These expectations should be an important consideration in preparing both a 'hit list' of employers, and the 'nuts and bolts' of a jobsearch portfolio (references, CVs, application letters, telephone technique, *etc.*). Yet they are only imperfectly understood, not least by the jobseekers themselves. This is partly because employer approaches to selection are often eccentric, usually influenced by fashion, and always fluid in the face of labour market circumstances.

3. Individual jobseekers in the jobsearch environment

The third element concerns the degree of skill, insight and motivation which jobseekers themselves bring to the process of finding a job, and how such considerations might vary between different individual circumstances and over time.

Although the characteristics of the unemployed flow are both complex and varied, there are certain common characteristics. Broadly speaking, they tend to be older, less skilled, less qualified and with a weaker recent employment history. In addition, those who are older and less well skilled may be more susceptible to experiencing longer spells of unemployment than others. Jobsearch skills are seen as an important lever that are potentially capable of transcending these disadvantages. However, analysis reveals that this is often undercut by a 'double whammy': relatively poor jobsearch skills contribute towards extended durations of unemployment, which themselves can have a corrosive effect on jobsearch.

Particular groups may have more problems with jobsearch skills than others. They tend to be those with least experience of jobseeking and include individuals who have been out of the labour market for a long time, or those who have been working for years and suddenly become unemployed. The LTU tend to be over-reliant on formal methods of jobsearch at the expense of informal methods such as speculative applications and using personal contacts.

High levels of vocational decidedness and occupational awareness are associated with successful jobsearch. The assertiveness of the jobseeker is also shown to be quite important in improving the effectiveness of their jobsearch. However, the experience of unemployment brings with it many psychologically damaging effects that may have an adverse impact on the individual's jobsearch. It can reduce the jobseeker's confidence, both in themselves and in their ability to find a job. Unemployment brings with it a sense of isolation and disillusionment when faced with numerous rejections. Furthermore, as the duration of unemployment increases, the number of employed people that a jobseeker has access to diminishes. Their social network tends to become composed mainly of unemployed people. This has a negative effect on jobsearch since the use of employed people as job brokers has proved to be a very effective method of jobsearch.

4. Public policy on assistance with jobsearch and benefit regimes

So far as the UK is concerned, there is a variety of schemes intended to assist jobsearch. Where there have been evaluations of the interventions, they all are successful to varying degrees, and this suggests that it is possible both to teach good jobsearch technique, and in so doing, to improve individuals' labour market chances. Beyond their diversity, what they tend to have in common is an entry criterion determined by the duration of unemployment. Most of the interventions provided are aimed at people who have been unemployed for six months or more. These entry rules are fairly strict and there is little provision to provide for individuals in initial stages of unemployment. Early evaluations of the BWPs, which break with this logic, suggest that their impact may be marginal.

Elsewhere, public provision is more diverse still. The US offers help on a wide and mixed range of programmes but not to all jobseekers, only those eligible for long-term welfare benefits. Countries such as Germany and Sweden put forward a coherent and comprehensive set of policies to assist those without jobs to re-enter the workforce. This

is done by investing a much higher proportion of GDP on job placement measures. Other countries, such as Belgium and France, have responded to higher unemployment by instigating new policies such as jobclubs and interviews for the long term unemployed.

The efficacy of such measures is not easy to judge as little evaluation has taken place. This is the case among both high and low spenders. The OECD has compared unemployment rates with spending on active labour market policies in its member countries but this does not show any clear cut relationship between spending and unemployment. International comparison is useful to show the different methods of assisting with jobsearch but it is not possible to draw causal connections from this type of review.

Towards a positive model of jobsearch (section 3)

There are compelling arguments about the benefits of improved jobsearch procedures at the level of the individual jobseeker. An economic perspective would suggest that relatively poor jobsearch skills contribute to an under-utilisation of the workforce, both by contributing to a slide into long term unemployment, and by leading people into making sub-optimal job choices through an unnecessarily constrained choice of vacancies.

A more pragmatic perspective would stress that unemployment is strongly associated with individual characteristics which are either fixed (age, previous job record, *etc.*), or difficult to change in the short run (qualifications, skill, location, *etc.*). Jobsearch skills and techniques may therefore not be ultimately the most powerful axis around which to promote assistance, but it is nevertheless one which is immediately accessible, and potentially cost-effective to address. However, the modesty of the net gains of improved jobsearch skills must nevertheless be kept in mind. In order to be cost-effective, such investments need to be relatively low cost ones.

There are clear implications here for the design of any such initiative, particularly regarding targeting and delivery. Almost all the sources, both live and archival, suggest that the diversity and complexity of the unemployed flow, allied to the variety and fluidity of labour market conditions (local, occupational and cyclical), and the multiplicity of employer preferences and modus operandi, together preclude any basis for targeting which is both simple and reliable.

That said, three general themes emerged from our discussions and reviews of the literature, which may be helpful in considering the future development of assistance with jobsearch.

The first concerns 'high risk' groups, whose characteristics might suggest a lack of familiarity with the labour market ropes, and jobsearch conventions. Such groups would include first time claimants with a long, stable and continuous record of employment, occupation changers, unexpectedly redundant jobseekers, and older workers. In our view, focusing on such groups could usefully supplement the UK's reliance on targeting through duration of unemployment.

The second concerns offsetting the undue narrowness which limits the channels which jobseekers use to identify vacancies. We have already mentioned the relatively low weight which unemployed jobseekers appear to lend to informal methods of jobsearch (particularly in occupations where formal methods coexist with informal ones). In addition, there may also be a propensity to discount informal methods as the duration of unemployment rises.

The third theme concerns shortcomings in the nuts and bolts of jobsearch. Even if individuals establish and maintain a broad and appropriate portfolio across the various recruitment channels, and even if they pursue them all diligently, it may be that their efforts are undermined by purely technical considerations. An effective axis for intervention would therefore be an early review of the quality and appropriateness of the jobseeker's jobsearch portfolio (references, CVs, application letters, telephone technique, *etc.*).

We conclude from our analysis of the jobsearch environment that there is no single and simple model which can satisfactorily encompass much of the diversity in the external labour market. In particular, such a model would need to strike just the right balance between the prescription of specific actions, which is so detailed as to be inappropriate to most of the cases in question, and pitching the description at such a high level of abstraction, that it cannot easily be operationalised in a specific case.

We have tried to resolve this by identifying several generic characteristics of successful jobsearch, which we conclude could both usefully and safely be invoked by the Employment Service in drawing up individual BWPs. The eight characteristics are:

1. Self-Motivated
2. Occupationally Focused (and realistic)
3. Breadth across Vacancy Channels
4. Appropriate Balance in the Use of Vacancy Channels
5. Professional Implementation
6. Persistence and Continuity
7. Active File and Formally Recorded Log
8. Periodic Review

Incorporating these elements, we have devised a simple generic model of jobsearch, which again strikes (what we hope is) the right balance between over-prescription and over-generalisation, and which could be used both to inform the preparation of individual BWPs, and to locate specific Employment Service interventions, as follows.

1. **Initial Advice and Guidance Phase**; here the role of the Employment Service is to help clients draw up realistic BWPs, which are both appropriate to the individual's circumstances and aspirations, and based on appropriate jobsearch methods for the job goals suggested.

2. **Initial Implementation of jobsearch activity**; here the role of the Employment Service is to provide detail on implementation, as

well as job leads, *etc.* but the main thrust here properly belongs with the jobseeker.

3. **Maintenance and Fine Tuning Stage**; here, the Employment Service will provide appropriate assistance with implementation, particularly with the identification (and if possible amelioration) of practical constraints, record keeping, and reviews of client progress. The need for more profound remedial assistance may be indicated at this stage.

4. **Review Stage;** here the Employment Service should engage in a formal joint review of both procedures and job choices. Outcomes may simply be to stress the need for continuity and persistence, or could lead to more substantial changes in the BWP, in terms of job choice or jobsearch procedures, or both.

Four important and inter-related issues are identified affecting the Employment Service role in enhancing jobsearch, whose resolution is critical in setting the terrain on which the Employment Service can develop and apply its role in enhancing clients' jobsearch practices. On the basis of our research, and as a contribution to further discussion within the Employment Service, we propose how they might be resolved. The issues are:

1. **Timing**: at what stage in the trajectory of an individual's unemployment should the various phases outlined above be triggered?

   It is suggested that the initial advice and guidance phase should be triggered on first signing, and completed at a second, deliberately separate, 'Jobsearch' interview a week later, at which the client presents his/her BWP. On this basis, the Employment Service can decide whether to move directly to the implementation phase, whether there is any need for fine-tuning, and agree a review date with the client.

2. **Selection**: what should guide the Employment Service in making these decisions? To what extent is it possible or desirable to select individuals who are particularly at risk (of failing in jobsearch and perhaps falling into long term unemployment as a result) prospectively, rather than retrospectively, and direct to them a different portfolio of assistance?

   It is suggested that in addition to the use of a temporal (duration of unemployment) criterion, the Employment Service might also take into account the characteristics of the jobseeker (*ie* to what extent are they in one of our high risk groups?), and their evident proficiency in jobsearch (assessed through inadequate or incompetent BWPs). In addition it is also suggested that self-nomination could improve targeting.

3. **Resources**: how far does the Employment Service have the staff resources to cope simultaneously with high numbers of claimants and the need to provide better guidance with jobsearch techniques to them?

It is suggested that Employment Service resource constraints may be improved by the flexibility in the deployment of staff which reorganisation into Back to Work Teams permits. But in addition, the production of more comprehensive written advice and guidance about devising and implementing a planned and coherent approach to jobsearch would save on staff costs. This could usefully cover informing the initial job choice, providing guidance about the use of recruitment channels by occupation and employer type; encouraging the simultaneous use of informal channels; prompting jobseekers to identify appropriate target contacts or target employers; and identifying and their need for, and provision with, jobseeking 'nuts and bolts' (CVs, application letters, references, *etc.*).

In addition, quality of advice and guidance available to jobseekers through the Employment Service is influenced by the quality and currency of the Employment Service labour market information.

4. **Interaction with Benefit Administration**: how can the tighter administration of benefits and improvements in jobsearch procedures be made complementary and mutually reinforcing, rather than antagonistic and mutually undermining?

   It is suggested that a benefit regime should aim to provide a context which is supportive of the general principles of effective jobsearch, while avoiding the dead hand of over-prescription. We conclude that the most useful contributions to jobsearch which the benefit regime can make are firstly to require individuals to compose a satisfactory BWP during their first few days as a claimant, and secondly, to comply with the components of that BWP (including a log and active file, as suggested above) as a condition of continuing eligibility.

UNDERSTANDING THE JOBSEARCH ENVIRONMENT

Understanding the Jobsearch Environment

There are three main elements which combine and interact with each other in determining the success of individual's jobsearch activities.

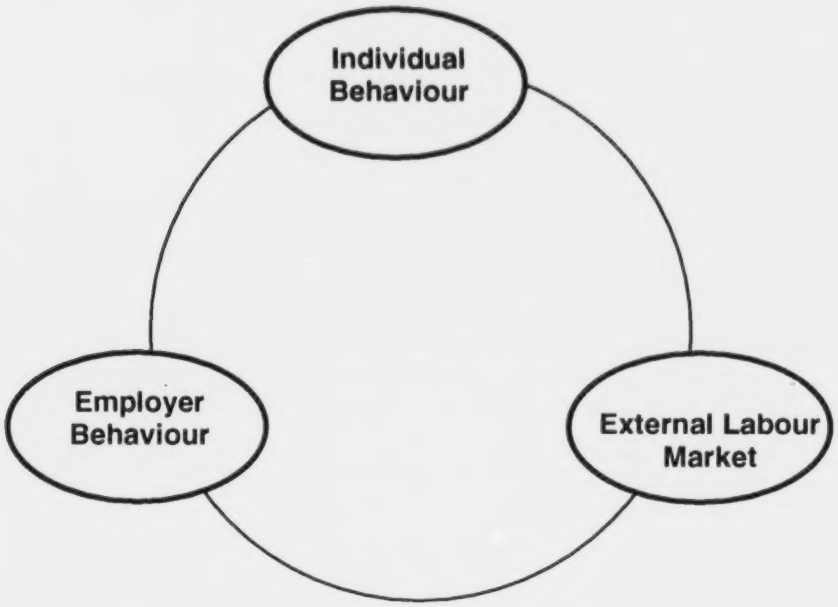
- Firstly, to the extent that an individual has identified particular types of job or occupation, then their search for particular vacancies will need to take into account, and be contingent with, the recruitment conventions of that occupational labour market, particularly those associated with recruitment and vacancy notification channels (*ie* they need to know where to look).
- Secondly, as employers are competing for labour within these occupational labour markets, they too are influenced by these conventions, and they too need to know where to look. But in so doing they are also influenced by a number of employer-specific and circumstantial considerations, which mean that they do not generally blindly follow the norms of occupational labour markets. So, the second element is an understanding of the ways in which different types of employer (in different circumstances) tend to approach the labour market.
- The third element is centred on individual jobseekers; it concerns the degree of skill, insight and motivation which they bring to the process of finding a job, and how such considerations might vary between different individual circumstances and over time.

Figure 1 shows how the three elements are inter-related.

The three elements have generally tended to collect a separate literature, and to be treated in isolation by academic analysts, but in our view it is in their interaction that an understanding of the dynamics of jobsearch can be found, and the key to successful jobsearch strategies for individuals is located. Thus, in the three chapters which follow we discuss the three elements in turn, but paying particular attention to their interaction.

A further element is the public policy and benefit regime, within which the troika described above operates. This is discussed in Chapter 5 for the UK, and Chapter 6 for selected overseas countries.

Figure 1. Three elements determining jobsearch success



2. Occupational Labour Markets and Recruitment Channels

In this chapter we consider the established norms of behaviour, which are separately understood and followed by sufficient individual recruiters and jobseekers that collectively they represent a basic sub-structure of the labour market, which can be ignored by the very strong, the very lucky or the very ill-informed, but within which most jobseekers and recruiters must operate. It suggests that the dominant influence on this sub-structure, the language in which it is expressed and can be understood, is mainly occupational. It draws on past survey data to illustrate this, and while such data are sufficient to illustrate the point, it is accepted that they are insufficient to operationalise it, precisely because of their antiquity. It is suggested that the publication of more recent research results on employer recruitment channels will allow this analysis to go forward.

2.1 The occupational basis of recruitment behaviour

One of the main axes around which recruitment and selection methods can be distinguished is the occupation to which each vacancy relates. This is of particular importance in understanding the link between individual jobseekers and such vacancies, since occupation (either putative or in past employment to date) often forms (or should form) a key parameter in their assessment of their employment goal. Thus to the extent that a jobseeking individual has some clear notion of occupational choice, the means of finding such a job should become much clearer.

In very broad terms, the more complex, responsible and highly skilled is the post in question, the more comprehensive and coherent will be the recruitment and selection procedures involved. For such a job, it is likely that the recruitment and selection procedures will be designed to (1) provide a detailed specification of the job requirements, (2) direct this information to a pre-defined target audience, (3) elicit from them particular information intended to help with shortlisting, and (4) provide a subsequent basis for selection, through interview, testing, references, *etc.* Conversely, the less skilled the post, the less elaborate and the less carefully designed are such procedures likely to be.

In selecting candidates for appointment, employers will be concerned with assessing both the individual's suitability (by which we mean their technical, vocational and other competencies to perform the tasks in question) as well as their acceptability (by which we mean the likelihood that their personal characteristics will produce

behaviour in post which others [managers, supervisors, colleagues, *etc.*] will find acceptable, *eg* stability, reliability, good inter-personal skills, hard worker, *etc.*). In general, we observe that the less skilled is the occupation in question, the less emphasis is placed on assessing suitability, and recruitment methods are favoured which give weight to acceptability. Conversely, where the selection will involve making an assessment of suitability (*ie* the exact and best match between the requirements of the post and the skills and experience of the applicant) then recruitment methods are favoured which also address suitability, indeed they may form the principal element in it.

In addition to the intrinsic skilfullness of the job in question, there is also the question of volume. Organisations generally have only one managing director, whereas they may have many hundreds of clerks, or drivers or VDU operators. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that they will invest more time, money, thought and energy in recruiting one of the former once every seven years, than one of the latter every seven days.

Finally, occupational labour markets have a momentum of their own, which individual recruiters cannot afford to ignore. Thus, for example, certain trade journals, or certain recruitment agencies, will be found to dominate the recruitment market for particular occupations. Employers may choose not to use them, but in so doing may limit their constituency to too small or too inappropriate a cohort of potential applicants. The attraction of these specific channels to the well-informed job seeker may represent nothing more than the past actions of many employers in choosing them, but nevertheless over time they can build up a self-sustaining dynamic which renders their use almost axiomatic on the part of both employers and jobseekers.

Thus for reasons of intrinsic job content, volume/regularity, and mutually understood convention, occupational labour markets have a tendency to convergence upon particular and distinctive norms, which serve to improve the process bringing employer and jobseeker together. They also, by implication, disadvantage the uninitiated; perhaps the employer who cannot afford to use such a route, but more importantly for our purposes, also the inexperienced, unthinking or otherwise disenfranchised jobseeker.

2.2 Characteristics of occupational labour markets

There is a plethora of studies seeking to catalogue the recruitment channels used by employers. The most reliable of these have been undertaken (though infrequently) by the Employment Service itself, primarily as a means for assessing and improving the penetration of Jobcentre placements in the labour market as a whole. Table 1 shows the recruitment channels favoured by employers, as revealed by the 1982(SCPR) and 1988(IFF) surveys for the Employment Service. For our purposes, these surveys show four important things.

Table 1. Recruitment channels favoured by employers

Recruitment Channels Used	SCRP 1982 Survey Results			IFF 1988 Vacancy and Recruitment Survey						
	All	Manual	Non-Manual	All	Mgt/ Profnl	Non-Mgt Clerical		Retail Catering	Skilled Manual	Un-skilled Manual
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Jobcentre/ EO	24	29	17	54	29	57	45	64	53	62
Careers Service	3	2	4	4	3	4	7	3	4	4
PER	–	–	–	1	0	3	2	0	0	0
Other Non-Commercial	1	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Private Agency	3	1	6	6	5	12	17	1	2	4
Local Papers	19	13	29	36	35	36	47	33	34	31
National Papers	1	0	2	4	15	3	5	2	2	3
Trade Press	2	1	3	6	31	3	5	2	3	2
Notice-board	1	1	0	9	6	9	4	18	4	3
Informal	43	49	33	42	34	43	30	51	45	39
Other	4	4	4	5	9	5	5	6	4	4

Source: SCPR and IFF Surveys

1. Multiple channels

This empirical work confirms that employers often use more than one channel for announcing individual vacancies to potential recruits; the IFF research suggested an average figure of 1.7 methods used per vacancy. Other research confirms this widespread practice (see for example, Manwaring, 1984, Atkinson and Papworth, 1991). In part, some of the methods used are not wholly within the employers' control; thus for example, casual callers usually pre-supposes the existence of a number of speculative applicants. However, employers can certainly choose not to use such channels, and many of them do, and so it is reasonable to conclude that their use implies at least some employer assent in their use.

Perhaps the most common combination is a 'belt and braces' stance; here a formal and open, but possibly costly and slow, approach to vacancy notification (targeted as appropriate to newspapers, journals, jobcentre or other agency) runs alongside an informal, cheap and fast approach (in which the employer's role can vary from active

encouragement to passive acknowledgement), which may have the disadvantage of not reaching a wide constituency. Where slack labour market conditions permit, perhaps the braces alone will be used, but the belt is brought into play as the market becomes more difficult.

2. Clustering by occupation

Secondly, the combinations of method used vary from employer to employer, and from time to time, but crucially they tend to cluster by occupation. As Table 1 shows, informal methods tend to be used in about a third of non-manual vacancies and about half of manual ones. The Jobcentre tends to be used for less than a third of managerial vacancies, and for almost two thirds of retail and catering vacancies. National newspapers take one in seven managerial vacancies, but only one in fifty for skilled manual jobs. Similarly, about a third of managerial vacancies are advertised in the trade press, compared with five per cent or less of other jobs.

For the moment the precise delineations matter less than the fact that such clusters exist, and persist over time. This confirms the suggestion above that employers need to take the accepted occupational conventions into account in deciding what recruitment channels to use.

3. Responsiveness to labour market conditions

The contrast between the two years suggests that the choice of methods used is somewhat sensitive to the tightness of the labour market, with an evident shift towards more, more formal, and more expensive methods under tighter supply conditions. However, such a shift does relatively little to disturb the occupational clusters or the widespread use of back-up methods, as can be seen by contrasting the underlying distributions between the 1982 and 1988 surveys shown in Table 1.

4. Employer preferences

Finally, despite all the clustering, there is considerable overlap and a high incidence of 'atypical' methods used. In part this undoubtedly reflects both the crudity of the categories used to group both the recruitment methods and the occupations. In part it also reflects the possibilities for affording or having easy access to particular channels. It may also reflect past experience. But the data suggest that these employer-specific preferences also produce certain clusters, associated with particular employer characteristics. The 1982 SCPR survey is, for example, much taken up with employer size as an explanatory variable for employer-specific preferences.

For the moment we do not need to discuss these employer-led variations. It is sufficient to note that empirical evidence confirms the importance of variations in practice by employer type. The axes around which these variations can be analysed are discussed below.

2.3 Implications for jobsearch

As has already been said, the main purpose for which much of the data has been collected has been to inform the marketing of Jobcentre services. However, it is apparent that the information can also be used to inform the jobsearch activities of jobseekers themselves. Two important avenues suggest themselves. Firstly, to the extent that many employers simultaneously use multiple recruitment channels for a given vacancy, then jobseekers could beneficially be advised and encouraged to pursue multiple methods of jobsearch themselves. As there is only a finite amount of time and effort needed to pursue some of them (for example scanning the 'situations vacant' pages in the evening paper), there is little reason why jobsearch plans could not have several dimensions, each devising a separate approach to the several different channels through which vacancies can be announced or discovered.

Secondly, to the extent that the individual jobseeker has some particular notion of the kind of job he/she is seeking, then the occupational clustering discussed above can give some guidance as to the relative emphasis which he/she ought to give to each particular channel. At the extreme of course, it is fairly obvious that someone seeking a position as, say, a finance director ought to place more emphasis on some channels (perhaps national newspapers, trade journals, and headhunters) than others (perhaps factory gate notices shop windows), but most jobseekers are not at these extremes, and may well need objective guidance towards an appropriately focused and balanced portfolio of approaches.

3. Understanding Employer Behaviour

In this Chapter, we present a simple four-fold typology which distinguishes between different employer-orientations towards recruitment according to their dominance in the labour market, and the extent to which they are driven by a particular personnel policy. Each ideal type is associated with particular recruitment channels and selection procedures. The chapter continues by refining this distinction, by considering the more detailed circumstances which might surround a particular instance of recruitment, and which would therefore influence the recruitment and selection preferences suggested by the basic model.

3.1 A typology of recruitment orientations

The following typology derives from two main sources; the first is the innovative work of Paul Windolf (Windolf, 1982), summarising comparative case studies of recruitment and selection procedures in 156 employing organisations in the (then) Federal Republic of Germany and in the UK. The second source is the several IMS studies cited in the bibliography, evaluating employer behaviour in local and occupational labour markets (particularly Atkinson, Hirsh and McGill, 1984). Windolf's original work is acknowledged, and somewhat amended in this version.

The typology is based on a two way distinction; on the one hand it distinguishes between employers who are dominant in the relevant local labour market, and for whom the external labour market provides relatively few quantitative or qualitative constraints, and those who have little such labour market power. By some combination of high relative pay, job security, good prospects (for training, promotion or subsequent career development), and/or good working conditions, the former employers enjoy a labour market position close to monopsony, and they can impose their own requirements on that labour market. This may simply be a matter of 'creaming off' the most suitable candidates for employment, or it may involve a more fundamental influence on labour supply by, for example, influencing the curriculum of educational establishments, or using leverage to influence the qualification structure of particular occupational labour markets, in ways favourable to that employer. By contrast, those with no such advantages are obliged to take what the labour market offers, and to accommodate to an external environment which is largely unresponsive to their individual actions or preferences.

On the other hand, the second distinction is concerned with the extent to which the recruiter is driven by a conscious and coherent personnel or human resource strategy, intended to secure goals more ambitious and far reaching than getting 'bums on seats'. In Windolf's original conception, this distinction was between employers facing the need to change the composition or utilisation of their workforce in some way (perhaps in response to technological, work-organisation or product market changes), and those who were not. In our view, this represents a special case of a somewhat wider distinction between an 'active' personnel orientation (with overt goals, and systematic procedures for achieving them), and a 'passive' one, for whom recruitment need only maintain the size, and reproduce the character of the existing workforce. Employers with an 'active' personnel orientation will exercise overt and deliberate choices and express them through conscious recruitment procedures. For the more 'passive', it is sufficient simply to conduct recruitment and selection activities in the traditional way, which may well be lacking in rationale, if not in rationality.

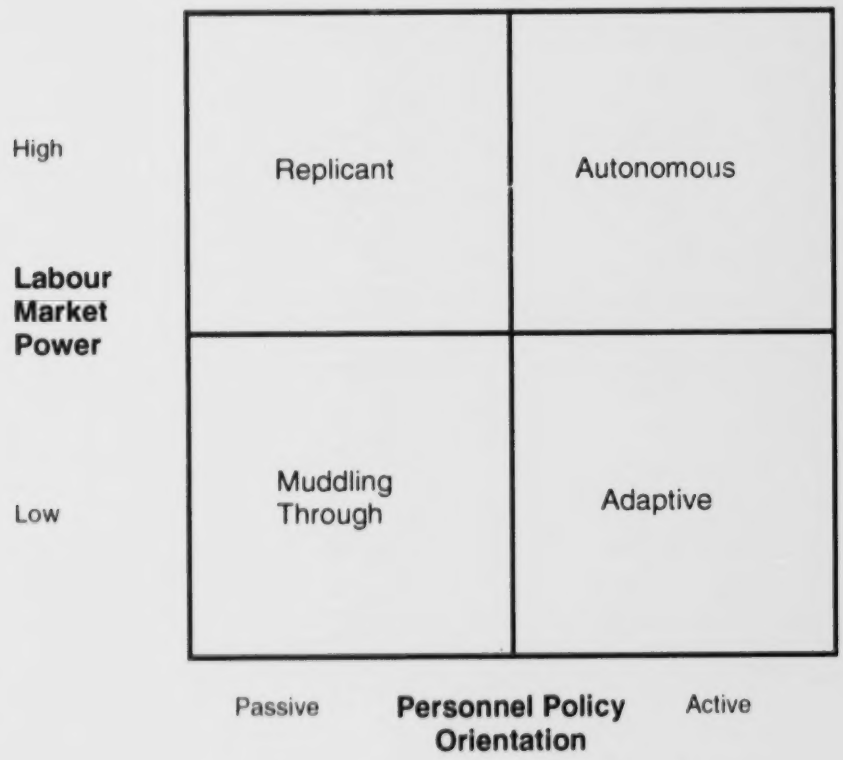
Quite clearly, just as the first distinction can turn on several indicators (relative pay levels, conditions, promotion and training opportunities, employment security, *etc.*), so can the latter. In this case, it turns on such questions as the existence of a professional personnel function within the employing organisation, the relationship between it and line managers, the physical structure of the organisation (from single site to multiple branches), the influence of trade union or employee representatives on staffing and hiring practices, *etc.* as well as on Windolf's organisational and business change considerations. A pertinent and relatively recent example of the effects of a strong and influential personnel-policy orientation can be found in the equal opportunities policies in recruitment now pursued by many public sector bodies, in particular local authorities. Though these organisations do operate (often sophisticated and formal) internal labour market mechanisms for alerting existing employees to upcoming vacancies, so too many of them also operate a parallel system of public, open and formal advertising of posts, specifically to improve access to minority groups. Arguably, such organisations have little intrinsic need to do this; the posts could be filled quite adequately simply by word of mouth and the extended internal labour market. However, it is precisely that they have extrinsic recruitment goals, and a strong personnel orientation towards their achievement that they engage in such practices.

It should be stressed at this point that the typology is concerned with individual cases of recruitment. Particular employers may properly be allocated to different quadrants when recruiting different occupations, so that for example, a local authority may simultaneously be a dominant employer in the local labour market for clerks and secretaries, but very weak in the market for technical or computing staff. In addition of course, such distinctions describe only ideal types and rarely real firms. Furthermore, the dimensions defining the different recruitment orientations must in reality be continuous and qualitative, rather than the dichotomous categories which these distinctions are now to be used to derive. Reality is always infinitely complicated and often perverse in its refusal to

submit to crude classifications. Nevertheless, an understanding of a complex reality is often facilitated by such distinctions.

With this caveat in mind, we can proceed to construct the taxonomy, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Recruitment orientations



The taxonomy includes four ideal types which we can use to label and distinguish between four distinct types of recruitment orientations, and these can now be described in more detail.

The autonomous orientation

This employer knows what it wants, knows how to get it, and uses its combination of labour market muscle and personnel know-how to ensure that it does. Good examples of this type of employer are not hard to find; the largest dozen employers in most towns will probably include six or seven; the large greenfield new entrant to a depressed labour market (Nissan in Sunderland, Toyota in Derby, *etc.*); the sectoral leaders in growing industries (BT, British Gas, the major clearing banks).

The sort of procedures and practices which the autonomous organisation demonstrates are distinctive; they have the effect of

marshalling recruitment opportunities to definite recruitment ports, subjecting them to precise specification, and containing their number.

The origination of a vacancy in this organisation is likely to be carefully considered before resorting to recruitment. This consideration will have two dimensions. Firstly, the relationship between the vacancy and possibility for internal labour market movement will be relevant. Organisations of this type tend to have quite complex internal labour markets, but also quite coherent ones, with relatively well beaten paths, promotion lines and seniority systems within them. Secondly, most organisations engage in both 'reactive' and 'prospective' recruitment (*ie* between straightforward replacement of leavers, and recruitment for future development; see Atkinson, Hirsh and McGill for further discussion), but the ratio is likely to lean more strongly towards 'prospective' in these cases. Recruitment from the external labour market tends therefore to be restricted to certain points within the staffing system, and vacancies elsewhere are likely to be filled through internal movement rather than external recruitment.

The autonomous recruiter is likely to begin the recruitment process with a fairly precise definition of the ideal candidate, covering educational and vocational qualifications, precise skills, competencies, experience and perhaps personal characteristics such as age, attitude and motivation. These are likely to be specified within a relatively small range. The more recruitment is limited to relatively few entry ports, the stronger this definition is likely to be.

For the autonomous recruiter (who will normally not experience any difficulty in securing the necessary volumes of applicants), the aim is to contain and reduce those volumes to proportions which are both manageable and consisting only of people meeting the specification. As a result, it is likely to use only those recruitment channels which it believes will lead it to such candidates. Quite what these channels are depends in large part on the occupation in question (and this is discussed in the previous chapter). Thus, despite its dominance of the labour market, the choice of recruitment channels for such recruiters still takes account of the established conventions of occupational and (to a lesser extent) local labour markets, because the recruiter wishes to target particular groups, and avoid the rest.

Pre-entry selection is likely to be fairly formal and systematic, matching candidates against the required specification, requiring candidates to provide the appropriate information to facilitate this, and in some cases involving a long and elaborate selection procedure, with some mix of profile-matching, testing and interview. Neither poor quality nor over-qualified candidates are likely to be acceptable.

Waiting lists are observed in organisations of this type, but again entry to them tends to flow from this selection process, as only near-miss candidates are likely to go onto such a list. Access to the list is therefore in the control of the recruiter, and in no sense circumvents the selection procedures of the organisation.

Post-entry selection (*ie* a probationary period) is likely to be rare. The aim of the formal specification process and selection procedures is after all to achieve a precise match between the profile and the recruit.

The replicant orientation

This orientation is also found among organisations which are dominant employers in local or occupational labour markets, but in this case there is no correspondingly strong personnel function imposing a professional and specialist slant on all aspects of recruitment. This is not to say that such organisations do not have a personnel function; they may do, but its influence is relatively weak. There can be many reasons for this; in recent years, its role may have been supplanted by workers' representatives (for example in printing, in electrical contracting, in the steel industry); more likely currently is that its role has been displaced through reorganisation (decentralisation, de-layering, *etc.*) and the resulting primacy of line managers. It may be caused simply by the physical structure of the organisation, with multiple small branch organisations (in retailing, hotels, leisure, or personal services for example) weakening the grip of any central personnel regulation over what happens on the ground.

In the absence of a strong and self-assured personnel policy, recruitment orientations tend to become more 'reactive', (with recruitment being more likely to be related to immediate vacancies) and more 'risk-averse'. In these circumstances, the characteristics of the existing workforce implicitly become the operative criteria for new recruitment, particularly if this is simply replacement of wastage, rather than growth or new sites being opened.

Like the autonomous organisation, the replicant enjoys a measure of labour market power, and again for it the main problem is selection, rather than attraction. In the absence of personnel specialists, or as a result of their relegation from the centre of the recruitment stage, the existing workforce not only becomes the model for new replacements, it also becomes the vehicle for locating them. Word of mouth and personal recommendation (perhaps mediated through a waiting list) tend to play an important role in the recruitment procedures of these organisations. The notion of the extended internal labour market has been developed (see Manwaring) to describe this set of procedures whereby existing staff are made aware of, and encouraged to make recommendations for, upcoming or current vacancies. The degree of overt encouragement varies of course, as does the constituencies so encouraged (at one extreme long service, loyal, compliant employees may be permitted to recommend close relatives, at the other all employees may be rewarded through a recruitment bounty for a recruit which they introduced to the employer).

The role of such personal recommendations has long been recognised (Ganovetter, 1974), and more recently Dawes (1982) has drawn attention to their role in minimising the element of risk in selecting individuals to join a workforce. However, it is important to remember that it is only for relatively low skill jobs (or ones which come with a very clear and recognised accreditation of their intrinsic skill

requirements) that such personal introductions comprise the totality of the selection process. Where such skill levels are low or can be taken as read, then the personal characteristics of the applicant loom relatively large (will they fit in? will they get along with everybody else? will they be a good employee?), and the personal recommendation of an existing employee who already him/herself meets such criteria can form a large part of the selection procedure.

Under such a regime, post-entry selection is observed, as indeed it invariably is where selection methods are subjective. Formal or informal probation periods are used, but they form a backstop to the main element.

As Windolf stresses, such methods of recruitment are not appropriate where the organisation is engaged in a major technical or organisational change which may be shifting its criteria for a successful employee. This apart, such informal means of identifying and selecting suitable candidates are very attractive for organisations who lack the means or the will to engage in systematic search activity in the external labour market, or the capacity to implement any more sophisticated and objective testing. They are cheap; they are quick (particularly in slack labour markets or for market leaders); they appeal to recruiters who may have to work closely with the recruit in question and so are keen to recruit 'our sort of chap', and so they generally appeal to line managers and supervisory staff.

Adaptive orientation

Organisations in this quadrant try to make up in effort (and sometimes imagination), what they lack in strength. Such organisations engage in systematic and intensive search activity. They try to attract as many applicants as possible, using most of the recruitment channels available to them, and moving between them in a pragmatic way according to the state of the labour market, the nature of their immediate requirements, *etc.*

The emphasis in such organisations is on casting as wide a net as possible across the labour market, and then selecting the best of what turns up. They are likely to have a specification for suitable candidates, but this is likely to be a minimum specification, which will be exceeded if possible, and dropped if necessary. However, it is their aim to conduct a sufficiently active recruitment campaign as to avoid this resort. At times of labour shortage, such organisations can go to extreme lengths in such campaigns, for example, expensively shipping in workers from distant and cooler labour markets, experimenting with term-time contracts, *etc.*

Selection procedures tend to be objective, but flexible. Thus such organisations will always try to select and recruit the best from among their applicants, but may well be prepared to adjust the minimum requirements in the face of particularly adverse labour market conditions. Thus, selection is often reduced to simply a matter of weeding out wholly unacceptable applicants.

Muddling through

Employers adopting this stance probably form the majority in any labour market. They possess relatively little power in the labour market, must be content to take what the potential recruits offer, and to accommodate to an external environment which is largely unresponsive to their individual actions or preferences. They do not have an active personnel strategy, possibly in the case of smaller businesses, because they simply do not have a personnel manager or function, but also because their staffing ambitions are modest, unguided by much coherent planning or strategy, and not pitched much beyond satisfying their immediate staffing.

Such employers tend to be caught in a 'Catch 22' on the one hand, and particularly at times of labour shortage, they are able to invoke little real discretion in their choice of recruits. They are virtually obliged to take on such staff as they can attract who comply with a bare minimum standard. On the other hand, because such businesses are often small, relatively informal and lacking a separate personnel department, recruit and recruiter are subsequently likely to be working in proximity. As a result, such employers tend to exhibit quite marked preferences for somebody who will fit in, stressing the recruit's personal characteristics as much or more than their vocational ones. This contradiction is frequently resolved by 'churning', with active use of probationary periods and work trials, providing the recruit with the opportunity to demonstrate the inter-personal and vocational skills in practice, which the firm's flimsy selection procedures have neglected to test for previously.

A common complaint among such employers is that they cannot recruit staff of high enough quality. Recent research at IMS among smaller businesses (Atkinson and Meager, 1993) found such qualitative shortcomings to be by far the most prevalent problem among firms with fewer than 50 employees. It is in order to identify and acquire such quality staff that these businesses also make extensive use of personal recommendation, as a means of recognising such elusive personal characteristics. Thus, word of mouth (among existing employees and managers, plus other peers and contacts of the recruiter) is used to advertise the vacancy, and personal recommendations are used as an important basis for short-listing. In addition to reducing the element of risk and uncertainty in a 'churning-based' approach, such methods have the secondary advantages of being cheap, and not requiring any professional personnel inputs. Thus, attracting large numbers of undifferentiated applicants is positively avoided, and the business of selection is boiled down to manageable, and relatively risk free, proportions.

It should be reiterated at this point that this idealised typology is a considerable over-simplification of the complexities of the real world. Nevertheless it offers both a robust categorisation of typical approaches to recruitment, and begins to explain why some recruiters behave differently from others. By focusing on the strength of the individual employer in a competitive labour market, and on the internal dynamics of his/her personnel function, we have identified the two principal explanatory variables influencing recruitment behaviour. However, these two variables are not the only ones, and

they are always set in a rather fluid circumstantial context. Thus, to refine the model further, we need to consider the role played by the particular circumstances surrounding recruitment. We may regard these as a set of filters, each influencing the basic recruitment orientation of the business, possibly in different directions on separate occasions of recruitment. They are discussed below.

3.2 The circumstantial influences on recruitment

The most important circumstantial influencing factor would appear to be the occupation of the recruit in question. As we have argued above, occupational labour markets exist independently of the actions and preferences of even the most dominant employer, and to a greater or lesser extent, employers are obliged to take into account the conventions and expectations found in such occupational labour markets, and modify their recruitment practices accordingly. Thus, for example, in the IMS research on small businesses noted above, it was observed that the typical recruitment pattern of immediacy, informality, personal recommendation, word of mouth, and local networks, mutated into something more formal, less local, more systematic, more forward-looking, more discerning and more objective, as the occupational status of the target recruit rose. This was evident even among the smallest firms, who would buy in the necessary professional specialism through a recruitment agency, when the occasion required it. However, the importance of occupational labour markets has already been discussed, and will not be re-visited here.

Labour market tightness

In the model presented above, labour market power is presented as a relative category, measuring the pulling power of one employer against the others. But as the overall demand for labour rises and falls in the labour market, so all employers experience an absolute change in their power *vis à vis* job seekers. Thus, the second filter influencing recruitment practices must be the general level of demand in the labour market as a whole. As the relevant (local, occupational, *etc.*) labour market slackens, so in general those employers who continue to recruit tend to demonstrate two types of behaviour; they move towards recruitment methods which will contain the number of applicants to manageable proportions, consistent with any quality considerations, and secondly, they intensify the rigour of their short-listing and selection criteria. The emphasis shifts from attraction to selection. Both shifts are consistent with operating in a buyer's market, and in effect may be represented in our typology by moves from the lower quadrants to the upper ones.

Thus we observe employers active in slackening labour markets tending to reduce the number of recruitment channels they use, particularly the more expensive ones. Recruitment channels which in more difficult times were avoided on grounds of perceived low quality of applicants may become more acceptable, just as the expensive necessities of those difficult times (headhunters,

recruitment agencies, and staff bureaux) may be shed. Where possible, the number of applicants coming through a particular channel is reduced; thus for example, Jobcentres are asked only to send two or three pre-screened candidates. In parallel with this partial withdrawal from the external labour market, the internal labour market may become more important as an alternative to recruitment. Thus, if businesses are curtailing their demand for labour, they will tend to transfer staff internally in order to avoid redundancy and maintain promotion opportunities. This has considerable knock-on consequences for recruitment. Obviously, it further reduces the number of external vacancies, but it also has the effect of making impending vacancies more widely known among existing employees. Even if the employer is not seeking to solicit external applications through existing employees, this is likely to be the outcome.

In so far as selection procedures are concerned, the balance of evidence (see for example, Bevan and Fryatt, 1988, Wood, Jenkins *et al.*, 1983) suggests that traditional selection procedures are relatively slow to change, particularly in response to purely cyclical conditions. Thus, application forms plus interview plus references remain entrenched as the most common procedures, but with criteria which are somewhat elastic within upper and lower limits of acceptability, according to the state of labour supply. Jenkins *et al.*, (1983) for example found that employers tended to raise their minimum acceptability standard during the recession of the early 1980s, placing greater emphasis on finding stable, reliable and flexible workers than previously.

In 1982, Wood and colleagues, assessing the effect of intense recession on recruitment practices concluded that:

> 'the main effect of recession has been an intensification of informal channels (although some firms continued to advertise and use the Jobcentre) .... the prime adjustment is through informal channels and not through formal criteria and procedures; the recession has simply accentuated the tendency to use the cheapest and perhaps the most reliable channel — namely social networks.'

Conversely, in 1987 (with a tightening labour market) IFF concluded for the Employment Service that informal channels were diminishing in importance, both in terms of the proportion of engagements for which they were used, and in terms of their success. As Ahmad and Hardcastle (1991) suggest, survey evidence on the actual use of different recruitment channels under differing labour market conditions must be treated with some caution, but they concur that generally such research supports the notion that employers make more use of informal channels, whether deliberately or not, during times of slack labour market conditions.

It is important to note that such a general (if far from complete) shift towards informal methods of attracting applicants as the labour market cools, may stand in contrast to the perceptions of unemployed jobseekers about what constitute viable and worthwhile avenues to pursue. Dawes (1992) for example, suggests that direct approaches to employers (both guided by recommendation and speculative) are

used regularly or as the main method of jobsearch by relatively few of his long term unemployed respondents. Manwaring (1984) argues that under conditions of high unemployment of long duration, the number of those making direct application falls dramatically (p. 163). However, it may be that such perceptions are more a reflection of the finite and shrinking opportunities available to use such approaches under such labour market conditions than a full reflection of their relative utility.

Functional responsibilities within the firm

Except among very small businesses, recruitment practices and convention are the result of collective agreement within the organisation, rather than unilateral decisions. Most importantly they reflect a balance between the professional specialisation of the personnel function, the operational priorities of line and departmental managers and the implicit or explicit influence of employee representatives. There can be little doubt that the last decade has seen the growing importance of the departmental and line manager influence, at the expense of the other two. In part this has been due to the re-assertion of the right to manage during the early 1980s, which curtailed union influence over internal promotion lines and seniority systems. In part it has been due to the fashion for de-centralisation and flatter organisational forms among UK businesses. This latter shift has moved much of the responsibility for implementing personnel roles to operational managers. Thus, as the responsibility for recruiting and selecting departmental staff (*ie* most often blue collar or non-manual jobs below the professional and managerial occupations) has become less of a specialist function and more of a day to day responsibility of the line, so too has emerged a more pragmatic approach both to recruitment methods and selection techniques. Thus, on the one hand, the sensitivity of the choice of recruitment channels to external labour market conditions appears to have increased (as line managers are less influenced by formal considerations of abstract good practice), and on the other hand, cost considerations (now appearing more overtly on departmental budgets) have become more important.

The result of these two shifts (towards managerial pragmatism, and cost sensitivity) has been to accentuate the attractiveness of informal methods of recruitment, where these can be shown to produce satisfactory recruits. Current labour market conditions generally do tend to produce them, and thus we would expect to see these methods becoming more prevalent for both internal and external reasons. It seems likely that the long term shift from personnel department to line manager as the locus of the recruitment decision will result in greater volatility of recruitment channels and methods, as pragmatism and opportunism displace professional inertia.

Nature of the intake

There is likely to be considerable variation in the recruitment practices adopted by employers according to the nature of the new intake. To the extent that this represents simply replacement for labour turnover, or perhaps a marginal increase in staffing, then the

informal methods are likely to be important. However, if the recruitment is of substantial numbers (say for the opening of a new site, taking on a whole new shift, *etc.*) then the recruitment is likely to attract considerably more formality, pre-planning and objectivity in both design and implementation. In so far as a new site is involved, then some efforts may be made to build around a core of existing workers, by transferring some from existing sites, but otherwise the opportunities for recruiting through personal contacts may be relatively slight. Under these circumstances, there is likely to be a much greater role for a central personnel function than otherwise (or indeed subsequently), and a greater use made of formal advertising, formal selection methods, formal waiting lists, *etc.*

Establishment size

Reference has already been made to the important influence of organisational size in influencing recruitment methods, but the influence of size must be extended to cover establishment size — in particular to the size of the establishment actually engaged in recruiting. In small businesses the two might well be contiguous, but among larger organisations, there are notable differences in the approach to recruitment according to the size of establishments, which together comprise the business organisation. Where establishment size is large, a much higher degree of formality is observed in both the established recruitment and selection procedures and in the means of implementing them. However, in those cases where large organisations are broken up into small and relatively autonomous operating establishments, then a far higher degree of informality is often found. Construction businesses, retailing outlets, hotel chains are all good examples where recruitment to many jobs is conducted at site level, often by non-specialist site managers, in a relatively informal manner.

The association between small establishment size and informal recruitment methods is far from absolute, as recruitment procedures in banks and building societies testifies, but it does seem to be the norm, which will automatically develop unless the host organisation explicitly and overtly takes strong measures to impose a more centralised (or regionalised, in financial services) regime. Large retail outlets in the UK represent an interesting case in point; some stores (*eg* John Lewis/Waitrose, Marks and Spencer) impose quite strong centralised controls, often implemented directly at sites by local personnel managers; others, (*eg* Sainsbury) give local store managers much more discretion, within an overall staffing budget.

Sector

It is frequently asserted that certain industries exhibit unique recruitment patterns and preferences; the construction, shipbuilding and print industries are often cited as examples with quite specific practices which are generally not found elsewhere. In our view this sectoral-specificity is exaggerated, and can be quite adequately explained by the factors mentioned above. For example, the apparently casual recruitment methods favoured in construction apply only to manual workers at site level, and are largely a function

of establishment size (small), firm size (small), personnel orientation (weak), and labour market power (low). Similarly, some of the recruitment practices which until recently characterised the print and electrical contracting sectors are largely explicable in terms of union power at site level. Again, the retail sector makes particular use of public noticeboards to announce vacancies, and this is less adequately explained by the factors above, although it clearly reflects the ease of reaching appropriate sectors of the public through advertising vacancies in the stores themselves. The method used in this case is thus a reflection of the physical structure of the establishments; elsewhere in the same sector, but where this structure is different (in warehouses for example) the public noticeboard is not particularly favoured.

In reality, sector tends to act as a proxy indicator for some of the more general factors outlined above, and the coincidence of certain practices across whole sectors is in large part simply a reflection of the strength and universality of certain combinations of these factors in particular sectors. Thus in our view, sectoral considerations are useful as a shorthand indicator, but *per se* have little explanatory power.

4. Understanding the Unemployed Jobseeker

When focusing attention on the unemployed jobseeker we need to examine their personal characteristics and behaviours in an attempt to gain an understanding of possible causal or contributory factors to long term unemployment. Jobseekers bring varying degrees of insight, knowledge and motivation to the process of finding a job which have implications for the effectiveness of their jobsearch. The experience of unemployment itself is also of interest as it can bring with it undesirable psychological effects and problems which in turn may impinge on the jobsearch behaviour of the unemployed.

This chapter focuses on the jobseeker and looks at aspects of their characteristics, behaviour and situation that can play a determining role in the effectiveness of the individual's jobsearch activities. It looks at:

- the composition of the stock of unemployed: who are they and what are their characteristics? We also seek to identify if there are certain groups/individuals who are more susceptible to long term unemployment than others.
- the jobsearch skills of the long-term unemployed: is there anything in their approach to jobsearch which may be contributing to their duration of unemployment?
- the psychological implications associated with unemployment and the effects that this may have on jobsearch activity: how the effects of unemployment vary between individuals/groups and the identification of possible mediating variables.
- one of the serious effects of unemployment — the negative effect that it can have on the individual's social relations. The reasons for this social isolation and the consequences of this on the individuals jobsearch are discussed.
- whether jobseekers set a reservation wage and examines the possible relationship between unemployment duration and benefit level. If the unemployed jobseeker does set a reservation wage, how do they do this and what effect does this have on jobsearch behaviour?
- behavioural factors that can impinge on an individual's jobsearch behaviour. These factors include the level of occupational awareness and the vocational decidedness of the jobseeker, their level of assertion and motivation.
- finally, based on all the information above we discuss some jobsearch behaviours which are seen to be more effective.

4.1 Characteristics of the unemployed

Many theorists, in an attempt to understand more fully long-term unemployment, have looked closely at the personal characteristics or behaviour of the unemployed themselves. This is an area of confusion as the question of cause and effect comes into play here. Is long term unemployment caused by the behaviours or characteristics of the individual or are these behaviours and characteristics the result of unemployment? To ask such a cut and dried question here may appear to be a bit unrealistic and what needs to be stressed is the interactional effects of both. While some people may be more susceptible than others to experiencing longer periods of unemployment, the very experience of unemployment itself can be a contributory factor in bringing about certain behaviours and characteristics (*eg* low motivation, reduced jobsearch).

Dawes (1992) divided the characteristics and behaviours of the unemployed into three categories, these are:

1. Inherent factors: which he claims are the permanent characteristics of an individual, *eg* age, gender, household type, health/disability status and ethnic background. The unemployed individual has little control over these factors and much of the research carried out in this area indicates that they can play an important determining factor in an individual's employability. Surveys, for example, carried out in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s consistently identified age as the strongest single influence upon what happened to people after they lost their jobs, *eg* the older the individual the longer it took them to find work (Banks & Davies, 1990).

2. Behavioural factors: which are concerned with the actions taken by individuals and the extent to which they reflect their own feelings and decisions. These include jobsearch strategy, motivation and confidence, geographical mobility and commuting. These are conditional characteristics that have an important part to play in the effectiveness of an individual's jobsearch.

3. Human capital factors: a term which he used to refer to skills, qualifications and experience of individuals which are arguably of value in the labour market. These include educational and skill based qualifications, literacy, numeracy and labour market history.

Inherent and human capital factors have been shown in the literature to be an important predictor of the individual's chances of obtaining employment.

Banks and Davies (1990), for instance, concluded that long term unemployment is more likely to be found among those who are older, in poorer health, with fewer qualifications, previously in semi-skilled or unskilled jobs often in construction or declining manufacturing industries, and living in economically depressed areas.

Daniels (1990) outlined the main characteristics of people making up the unemployed stock; they come mainly from the less skilled manual working classes; they include a relatively high proportion of workers

who are in less than good health and have some disability that limits the work that they can do; and are drawn from the oldest and youngest age groups among the economically active population. He also said they tended to be low paid when in work compared with others in a similar occupational category, likely to be single, or if married to have a large number of children.

Daniels (1990) also found that the unemployed tend to have been low paid in their previous job and had short periods of service in their most recent jobs. His study showed that the recurrently unemployed make up a large part of the unemployment flow. He attributed this as being possibly due to the fecklessness of the workers involved and of their inability to stick at any job.

The LTU have sometimes been criticised for possessing uncommonly high wage expectations which may actually inhibit them from applying for jobs if they perceive the wage offered to be too low. This is quite a complex issue and one that has received a lot of attention in the literature. Some argue that unrealistic wage expectations are the result of the unemployed being out of contact with the labour market and so they no longer understand how it operates or what constitutes a realistic wage. Others (see for example Dawes, 1992) believe that to look at the reservation wage as an contributing factor to long term unemployment is misguided and also misleading. He believes that in general the unemployed do not tend to set a minimum wage and if they do it is set against their personal and household costs and what they need to survive rather than set against benefit levels or any self perceived self value.

Similar to previous studies, Dawes (1992) found that younger people were more likely to get jobs than older people and that the middle-aged group, *ie* 35-55 year olds, were the least successful. He attributes this finding to the fact that the latter group tends to have heavy household responsibilities and thus have higher wage requirements.

His investigations also found household type to be an important factor; single people with dependents were most likely to get a job while independent single people were least likely to.

His results confirmed earlier findings (*eg* Banks and Ullah, 1987) that those with health problems or disabilities were less likely to get jobs, further he found that those who were carers for household members who have problems were even less likely to get jobs.

4.2 Jobsearch skills of the long term unemployed

The common characteristics of the LTU have been discussed above. They tend to be older, less skilled, less qualified and to lack recent employment history. Considering these obviously disadvantaging characteristics that the LTU experience how important then are their jobsearch skills in determining whether they will obtain employment or not? Much of the literature in this area suggests that job-seeking

skills can be of benefit in acquiring employment above and beyond ability (*eg* Schmidt *et al.*, 1993) and that the job-search attitudes and strategies of the low skilled job-seeker may differ to those of the skilled job-seeker.

Some authors, for example White and Low (1989) show that those factors which depress chances of finding a job, *eg* lack of qualifications, no driving licence, *etc.*, can also suppress jobsearch. They found that search intensity was largely in agreement with the jobseekers' perceived expectation of success. The individual who is not confident about what they offer and does not perceive themselves to be competitive is likely to be less intensive in their search than is the individual who is more highly skilled and perceives themselves as such. It is questionable as to whether this reduced search is due to a lack of confidence on the part of the jobseeker or whether it reflects a realistic appraisal of their chances of success. The answer is probably a mixture of both these explanations, but whatever the case the individual should be encouraged to focus on their positive attributes and be aware of what they have to offer rather than dwelling on their negative aspects. It is often suggested that the unemployed aren't aware of their skills and competencies or may lack the confidence to make the most of what they have to offer. Lacking faith in what they have to offer may inhibit some jobseekers from applying or searching for vacancies.

In times of high unemployment, when there is a lot of competition for jobs, each jobseeker must ensure that (s)he is as competitive as possible in every way. This means that not only are their qualifications, employment history, *etc.* important, but so too is the actual way they go about looking for a job. They have to ensure that they are going about their jobsearch in the proper way, using the most appropriate channels and to be properly informed about the possible methods of job hunting. The attitude that they adopt to their jobsearch is also important: it is vital that they remain positive and confident about their chances of success.

Jobsearch strategies

The type of jobsearch strategy(s) that the unemployed jobseeker uses is a very important facet of their jobsearch approach.

It has been demonstrated in the previous chapter that informal methods of jobsearch, such as direct applications, using personal contacts, *etc.* can often be very successful strategies. The degree of success of these methods is of course affected by factors such as occupation, location, *etc.* but on the whole these methods should constitute at least part of most job-seekers' search strategy.

Research in this area (*eg* Dawes, 1992) has shown that these are often the methods that the long-term unemployed tend to use least. There are a number of possible reasons for their under-utilisation of such methods. The LTU may simply be unaware that these can be very effective ways of looking for employment and they may need to be reminded of their effectiveness and encouraged to use these methods.

The nature of the benefit system may serve to compound the problem. As part of the 'actively seeking work' aspect of the benefit contract, the unemployed have to provide demonstrable evidence of their job hunt. Frequent attendance at the Jobcentre allows them to clearly demonstrate this and this may encourage them to focus their jobsearch approach on methods which allow them to provide objective evidence of their jobsearch. Formal methods clearly have the upper hand here as it is not easy for jobseekers to prove that they have been busily building up networks of friends and relatives that they can use as contacts to gain information on jobs or that they have been busily writing to companies in the area.

It is frequently suggested that as unemployment duration increases the number of employed people that the unemployed know decreases. Their social circle tends to be composed predominately of the unemployed and this can put them at a disadvantage as employed people can provide valuable information about new jobs and act as job brokers to the unemployed.

Particular groups with jobsearch problems

During the course of this research a number of groups who may have particular problems with jobsearch were identified. They tend to be those with least experience of jobseeking and include:

- those individuals who have worked for years and then suddenly become unemployed. They enter unemployment in a state of shock and often have very little awareness of how to go about looking for a job. Individuals in this group are often unsure about what jobs to apply for as their previous line of work may have disappeared or they may find that their skills have become obsolete.
- people with disabilities — highlighted as another group who may experience difficulty in searching for a job, especially those who have been in sheltered employment for years and who have no experience of applying for a job themselves.
- women returners, also identified as a group who often experience difficulty when they attempt to re-enter the workforce. Aside from the obvious problem of obsolete skills, this group tends to have had very little experience of applying for jobs and lack self-confidence. Similar to the LTU they tend to be poorly qualified.

Many people who have researched the area of unemployment feel that in general jobsearch is not that much of a problem with school leavers and graduates. There are a variety of support systems in place that they can fall back on, for example, family, Careers Service and the Graduate Advisory Services. However, their relative lack of experience of the world of work and of jobhunting may leave some in need of assistance with jobsearch skills.

4.3 Problems associated with unemployment

Unemployment brings with it many problems that affect the jobseeker directly. The unemployed person for example, is faced with financial difficulties, a restricted budget, and the difficulty of keeping morale up as unemployment duration increases. They may also experience a sense of isolation and alienation from the working world. These problems can be far-reaching and varied and for the purposes of our research have implications for an individual's jobseeking behaviour.

Psychological implications

Many researchers have sought to investigate the psychological implications of unemployment and the following is a summary of some of the studies which have highlighted problems that unemployment can cause.

White (1991) concluded that most people (regardless of the duration of unemployment) describe their unemployment experience as being one of the worst things that ever happened to them. Following his investigations into the social impact of unemployment he summarised his findings by saying:

- Unemployment is a painful blow.
- Unemployed people are worse off financially than are any other group in society.
- Unemployment is dreary and joyless.
- Social life in unemployment is severely limited.
- Debt and other financial stresses in unemployment are likely to cause ill-health.
- Problems of unemployment fall most heavily on families with dependent children.

He also stresses that while the problems of long term unemployment are a serious ones, even short doses of unemployment are extremely unpleasant. It can often be overlooked that short-term unemployment can be a very unpleasant and disruptive experience especially for those who have had a long employment history. In short, employment, besides providing income and security, also provides activity, social contact and status all in one. Take away employment and all this is threatened.

Banks and Davies (1990) point out that studies of behaviour identify the demoralisation that sets in after prolonged unemployment, as evidenced by lower aspirations, less active life styles, social isolation and reduced jobsearch. Warr (1985) in a review of the literature on unemployment and psychological well-being found that cross-sectional comparisons of unemployed and employed people typically show greater psychological distress, depression and anxiety, less happiness, lowered self-esteem and greater experience of strain amongst the unemployed.

Much of the research available demonstrates that a decline in psychological well-being tends to follow the onset of unemployment with significant improvements after re-employment, *eg* Banks and Jackson (1982); Jackson *et al.* (1983). According to Warr (1985) there are a number of processes through which psychological health is affected by the experience of unemployment. Unemployment brings with it a number of changes: reduced income, restriction of behaviours and environment, loss of goal structure, reduced scope for decision making and skill utilization, increased negative activities (*eg* jobsearch leading to rejection), reduced interpersonal contact and changed social position.

Many early researchers have suggested that responses to job loss occurs in stages (*eg* Harrison, 1976; Hill, 1978). These are:

- Initial shock with active jobsearch.
- Optimism about regaining employment.
- Growing pessimism, anxiety and depression as successive failures to get a job are experienced.
- Fatalism, inertia and acceptance of joblessness.

Warr (1985) concluded that, in general, there is a gradual decline in psychological well-being during the first few months of unemployment, with some stabilization at a lower level, at about the sixth month of unemployment. Mitchell and Flynn (1988) summarised their research by saying that for the vast majority unemployment is a psychological damaging state leading to reductions in general psychological health, well-being and self-esteem, increases in anxiety and depression, and impairment of cognitive abilities. Numerous studies have supported their conclusions.

All of the research quoted here highlights the extremely negative impact that unemployment can have on the psychological well-being of the unemployed person.

Effects on jobsearch activity

Many researchers have suggested that there is an association between the psychological state of the individual as a result of unemployment and the ability to search for and hold down a job. It is often argued that the unsuccessful job-seeking behaviour of many of the unemployed is at least partly the result of the psychological stresses that they are under (Mitchell and Flynn, 1988).

Banks and Ullah (1987) reported that as the duration of time spent in unemployment increased, the job-seeking activity of young people decreased both in terms of the variety of jobsearch methods used and the specificity of positions applied for. They reported that while most of the unemployed are still committed to obtaining a job, increasing spells of unemployment were found to be associated with greater disaffection and less positive jobsearch attitude.

For many, the stereotypical image of the unemployed individual lacking motivation prevails. Empirical evidence, however, rejects the

idea that the unemployed become resigned and give up jobsearch. Banks and Davies (1990), for example, concluded that reduced jobsearch activity as the length of unemployment increases, does not necessarily indicate reduced commitment to finding work. Rather they say, this fall in job-seeking reflects a realistic appraisal of their chances of success.

When expectations are low, curtailed job-seeking prevents the frustrations that would otherwise result. This behaviour, they say, may be seen as adaptive and provides the unemployed person with a defence mechanism that prevents them having to experience continual rejection. As Robinson (1988) points out, if the LTU individual performs poorly in interviews and subsequently reduces jobsearch intensity, this may be a consequence of having made 200 applications, receiving only 20 interviews and being rejected after all of them, rather than reflecting some flaw in character. Much of the research highlights the potentially damaging effect that unemployment can have on the individual's motivation and ability to search for a job. To minimise or reduce these effects, authors such as Mitchell and Flynn (1988) recommend that when assisting the unemployed, attempts should be made to increase psychological confidence as well as providing help with jobsearch skills. This should have the result of keeping morale and motivation high while the unemployed person is job-hunting.

4.4 Unemployment and social isolation

It is often suggested that unemployment will lead to social isolation, at least partly caused by a reduction in disposable income restricting the ability to socialise. However, as we have argued above, many studies have also demonstrated that 'word-of-mouth' or informal networking can be one of the most productive jobsearch strategies.

White and McRae (1989), for example, found that the most prominent source of information leading to new jobs was personal contacts — family, friends and acquaintances and concluded that lack of such a network would, therefore, be an extremely serious disadvantage for a young person in long term unemployment. White (1991) adds support to this finding and concludes that by far the most important source of jobs for LTU is 'inside information' from relatives and friends. However, he found during the course of his study that less than half of the unemployed in his sample were able to make the contacts necessary to provide information about jobs as unemployment goes on. He suggests that a possible explanation for this is that the unemployed people who remain out of work tend to acquire new friends who are also unemployed. He also suggests that in areas of high unemployment, unemployed people tend to have unemployed friends.

A reduced disposable income which restricts their ability to socialise is often put forward as the reason for this (Dawes, 1992). In our society much of our socializing involves spending of money, whether it is going out for a drink or a meal. In a 1986 study by PSI,

unemployed young people were seen to develop what was termed 'non-standard behaviour':

> 'They took turns to pass time in each other's houses; or mastered the art of making one drink last the whole evening at the pub where rounds were no longer purchased by members of these circles. Such non-standard behaviour meant, naturally, that these young people had to stick with others in the same position and were not free to mix more widely.' (White, 1991)

People who experience long-term unemployment tend to be or become isolated from opportunities for developing social relationships with employed people who may serve as potential job brokers. White (1991) said that it seems clear enough that unemployment tends to corrode social contacts and activities and lead to greater isolation. The two main reasons for these reflect the two main features of unemployment — lack of a job and lack of money.

Holzer (1980) agreed with the suggestion that some of the most effective jobsearch methods can be friends, relatives and direct application without referral. Utilisation of personal contacts is not a method which is equally open to all. It requires the job-seeker to be involved in family, household or social activities with others who are employed and who can thus act as informal job brokers.

The importance of these informal methods are highlighted by the fact that employers often tend to favour receiving their candidates by direct application or by referral from present employees, viewing these as being more reliable and informative methods. The candidates coming through direct referral are often viewed as being more highly motivated, and as being better informed about the company and the job. If they are offered a job, they are more likely to accept it and if they accept a job they are more likely to stay.

The research seems to pinpoint that maintaining and establishing social networks while unemployed is of upmost importance in assisting jobsearch. Yet the unemployed, due to their jobless state and their restricted income, are the group least likely to be able to maintain social activity. Any strategy, therefore, designed to assist the unemployed should emphasise the potential advantages to be gained from using personal contacts and should aim to encourage 'networking' activity.

4.5 Duration of unemployment and benefits

It has sometimes been argued that one of the causes of long-term unemployment is that some individuals fix their reservation wage (*ie* the absolute minimum wage at which they would accept a job) by reference to their benefit levels. This group of unemployed become long term unemployed because they misunderstand how the labour market works and are holding out for a wage level that employers are not offering.

Dawes (1992) in his study found that while it can be said that unemployed people do set a reservation wage, this is set by reference to household costs as opposed to benefit levels. Further, he concluded that people do not relate the question of a reservation wage to the labour market at all and most do not believe that they should restrict their jobsearch to work that pays the absolute minimum subsistence. He believes in fact that the concept of the reservation wage is misleading and that the unemployed set the absolute minimum wage that they would work for by realistically appraising their personal or household costs rather than by any self perceived labour market value.

Lynch (1982) looked at the influence of benefits on the duration of unemployment and found that the reservation wage has no significant effect on the duration of unemployment. She further concluded that the level of unemployment benefit is insignificant as a determinant of reservation wages. The image of the young person choosing a life on the dole and turning down numerous job offers is not supported by her data.

White (1991) noted that people's stated wage expectations have little bearing on what they actually do; faced with a job offer many will abandon any wage targets they have in mind. According to Pahl (1984) having to live on state benefits is seen as a temporary downturn in their fortunes, a period of coping and getting by rather than a fresh benchmark against which to reassess their standard of living. Daniel (1990) supports this view by stating that those in unemployment conceive of that state as being temporary, even when it persists for long periods.

Banks and Ullah (1987) found little evidence in their study that people find unemployment attractive and in their survey they found very few people indeed who would rather not have a job. Fryer (1991) carried out a review of the research on unemployment and as a result refuted the notion that unemployed people are work shy. On the basis of his research he believes the vast majority are committed to finding paid employment. Further, he maintains that rather than benefit levels needing to be reduced still further to maintain incentives for paid employment, as some believe, he feels they need to be increased in the interest of better mental health. He further theorises that counselling approaches such as the Restart/Claimant adviser interviews when combined with the threat of loss of benefit for non-attendance cannot possibly succeed. This in his opinion would have the effect of one arm of policy undoing what another arm of policy is trying to achieve.

White (1991) further points out that financial uncertainty is one of the major potential problems for people on benefits who lack financial flexibility. This may lead unemployed people to be extremely cautious in their behaviour, even to the point, he claims, of turning their backs on job opportunities out of financial anxiety. To avoid uncertainty, the unemployed person may become increasingly locked into the benefit system, with its low, but sustainable and predictable, standard of living.

Is the argument for providing unemployment benefit to encourage people to look for a job which fits their skills, or is it that they should take the first job that comes along? White (1991) said the former implies a degree of choosiness and may take time, but the costs of maintaining a person a little longer in unemployment should be better balanced by the better utilization of skills.

While many authors reject the notion of the unemployed choosing a life on the dole, the issue of financial choice is a complex one. The financial restraints to be expected from unemployment have to be compared with the financial benefits from remaining in unemployment.

Prospective job offers are assessed not only in financial terms but there are also non-financial considerations, *eg* social status, self-esteem and entry to a career. Dawes (1992), for example, proposes that the unemployed do not go about their jobsearch with a fixed minimum in mind; rather they see jobs as having a number of characteristics that will interact with wage and influence the likelihood of their accepting an offer. Some authors have noted that it may be plausible to suggest that the disincentive effect on jobsearch of benefits would be greater among groups in lower paid jobs with the lowest career expectations.

4.6 Vocational decidedness and occupational awareness

Another strand in the argument when looking at jobsearch behaviour, is the level of vocational awareness and occupational decidedness of the job-seeker.

Carroll (1989) reviewed a number of studies which relate occupational decidedness directly to success in getting a job and concluded that, if a job-seeker has a clear idea, or some fairly crystallised idea, about what they might want to do then they are more likely to get a job. According to Daniels (1981) being prepared to accept any kind of work is not necessarily a desirable approach to jobsearch. He found that those who set out to find a particular type of job found jobs quicker than people who said they were looking for anything going. Others, for example Henderson (1988) and Banks and Ullah (1987) support this viewpoint. Stevens (1986) found, in a longitudinal study that job-seekers with crystallised specific job goals and independent self-actualised behaviour were more effective in getting a job. Those with vague, confused job goals and passive dependent behaviour were least effective.

Further support is received from Taylor (1985) who concluded that students who were more aware of their occupational interests and abilities were more likely to receive a job offer and also had greater confidence in their job decision and subsequently were more satisfied with the job.

Stevens (1986) sought to identify the personal factors operating in the success, or lack of success, of people in obtaining a job and points out

that luck has very little to do with getting a job. Rather it is a case of the job-seeker increasing the probability of getting a job by maximising all conceivable contact with employers, *eg* actively networking, direct applications, pursuing every job lead. She believes that inner factors, such as personality characteristics, are more critical to success in getting a job than are some external factors *eg* chance, influential friends, labour market conditions.

She identified positive job-seeking behaviour as being characterised by specific crystallized career goals and assertive, independent behaviour. Individuals displaying these characteristics were specific in expressing their desired goals in the terms of position, field and level, had job campaigns of their own, were co-operative and forthcoming during placement interviews and had an objective awareness of themselves. She said those with poor job-seeking behaviour were indefinite and vague about their job goals; passive and dependent to the point of permitting, and sometimes seeking out, others, to make vocational decisions for them.

She identified a third pattern of job-seeking behaviour which she termed moderate readiness. Job-seekers in this category were definite in some responses concerning job-goals and vague in others and tended to seek more information about job options.

According to Stevens (1986) those working with the job-seekers not only have to assist the job-seekers crystallise their vocational goals but also to improve the characteristics of their job seeking behaviour.

Other authors such as Schmidt *et al.* (1993), believe that an individual's assertiveness is an important influencing factor in the effectiveness of an individual's job-seeking behaviour. An assertive person may have an advantage over a passive job-seeker in obtaining pertinent employment information. The assertive individual is more likely to use job-search strategies such as direct applications and availing of personal contacts than is the less assertive individual (Cianni-Surrige and Horan, 1983). These informal methods which are associated with more assertive behaviour are also favoured more by employers as they tend to view individuals applying in this manner as showing initiative and being more reliable. Thee results of the study by Schmidt *et al.* (1993) seem to indicate that assertive job-seeking skills can be of benefit in acquiring employment above and beyond individual ability. They also suggest that it is possible to train an individual to use assertive job-seeking behaviours through jobsearch skills training programmes that emphasize and promote the use of these behaviours.

4.7 Effective jobsearch

As one of its aims this study sought to investigate if there is such a thing as generic characteristics of successful jobsearch. When this question was put to specialists in this area, many people pointed out each individual has a personal labour market that they have to go through and so there is no one rigid model of effective jobsearch.

There are many factors involved and in many ways each individual's jobsearch strategy will vary with their occupation, personal circumstances, the sector involved, location, *etc*. Different jobs and occupations often require different jobsearch approaches *eg* the highly skilled physicist will use different jobsearch strategies than will, for example, a lower skilled construction worker. For the former, specialist magazines may be the best place to look for suitable vacancies, while for the latter the jobcentre and local newspaper may be more effective.

It would appear that there is no ideal prescription for what constitutes successful jobsearch but that being said there are, however, certain general characteristics of individuals' approaches to jobsearch which seem to be associated with positive outcomes.

It has been demonstrated in the previous section that the level of occupational decidedness and vocational awareness of the individual can be an influencing factor in determining the success of an individual's jobsearch. The jobseeker who has a clear idea or some fairly crystallised idea about what they want to do and who has set out to find a particular job tends to find a job quicker than those who are prepared to accept anything going. Carrol (1989) suggests that an effective approach involves having a clear idea at the outset of the type of job to be applied for and, as unemployment duration increases, being prepared to widen the focus of the type of jobs considered suitable.

In addition to having a particular type of job in mind, Kahn and Low (1976) suggest that job-seekers who have more knowledge about individual firms and are systematic in their jobsearch tend to have more successful outcomes and are also more likely to accept job offers. By having researched employers and the labour market, they are more likely to be aware of the vacancies that they are suited to, be competitive for these vacancies and so make better use of time and energy than the individual who is applying randomly for anything going, regardless of whether these jobs are suitable or not.

The jobseeker must be committed to their jobsearch and to be prepared to put in the time and energy to make their search effective. Nobody can do this for them but support systems should be in place to provide assistance where necessary and to encourage them during their search. It is commonly believed that a jobsearch of moderate intensity is likely to be more successful than either a low intensity or a frenzied approach. The individual who applies for very little is limiting their chance of success as compared with the individual who apply for a wider range of suitable positions. Similarly, individuals who take a frenzied approach and apply for everything do not appear to be doing themselves any favours. This would appear to be especially true when using informal methods of application. The over-zealous jobseeker who is constantly ringing and writing to a company runs the risk of being seen as a pest rather than as a potential candidate. Likewise, the jobseeker who is constantly running around after friends and relatives to find out information is less likely to meet with co-operation and sympathy than is the individual who reminds friends subtly and at reasonable time intervals.

5. The Institutional Employment Service Framework and Public Policies in the United Kingdom

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter we look at the help and programmes offered in the United Kingdom, primarily through the Employment Service. At the present time, there is the question of whether the unemployed are providing an effective supply of labour to fill vacancies (Disney *et al.* 1992). This, in their view, raises the further question of whether unemployment could be reduced by doing more to help the unemployed. If they have the wrong skills, poor motivation, and little jobsearch skills, would it not be cost effective to offer them help?

Disney *et al.*, although realising that this may be rather crude, categorise these policies into five different types: temporary job creation measures, training measures, wage subsidy measures, miscellaneous direct measures, and intensive counselling and jobsearch measures. Here we will concentrate on the intensive counselling and jobsearch measures, which are designed to increase the intensity and the efficiency of jobsearch.

As it will become apparent the majority of these measures are aimed at the long term unemployed, with most becoming available, with exception for certain groups such as ex-offenders, after six months on the unemployed register.

5.2 Factors to take into account when designing a programme

As has been suggested in the previous chapter, unemployment is a psychologically damaging state with reductions in psychological health, self esteem, and well-being and increases in depression and anxiety (Mitchell and Flynn, 1988). This, therefore, reduces the attractiveness of the individual to potential employers. If this continues into the long run, expectations become lower and job seeking is curtailed to prevent the frustration that would result; *ie* they adapt to prevent themselves from experiencing rejection (Banks (1990).

Due to this association between psychological health and effectiveness of job search, Mitchell and Flynn suggest that programmes must equip the unemployed person with the confidence and resilience needed to actively seek appropriate positions as well as the knowledge to compete for employment. Mitchell and Flynn

recommend that programmes should be designed to include plenty of social contact, time structure, and active goal settings with active learning situations. Additionally, programmes should be of a long enough length of time to allow for skills learnt on the course to be easily reproduced outside of the programme. Programmes should also have explicit objectives as stepping stones to employment and counsellors should be extremely well trained to deal with issues and problems and be able to motivate and support clients.

Banks (1990) noted that statistics indicate a proportion of the long term unemployed fail to take up places on schemes while others leave early. He blames this partly on their lack of accurate information about what is on offer, and makes the point that awareness of schemes is not the same as an understanding of objectives and content of schemes. In many cases the unemployed are not convinced of the value of schemes as stepping stones to jobs. Mitchell and Flynn find that many programmes are able to satisfy these needs but that the unemployed are not aware of this and have negative views of programmes.

5.3 Framework

The Employment Service

Nearly all the programmes discussed in this chapter, as well as unemployment and related benefits, are administered on behalf of the Employment Department in the case of programmes, or on behalf of the Department for Social Security in the case of benefits, by the Employment Service. Its aim is to 'help promote an efficient labour market by giving positive help to unemployed people through its job placement service and other programmes' (The Employment Service, *Framework for Change*, 1990).

In April 1990, as part of the Government's *Next Steps* initiative, the Employment Service obtained agency status. This meant that it had more flexibility in the way it uses its resources and manages its affairs. The Employment Service is held more responsible for providing an improved service, with the development of the Jobseekers Charter, and giving better value for money. Additionally, this has meant that while many of the targets set are still activity based (*eg* the number of new claimants interviews carried out), the current direction of change appears to be a move away from setting activity-based targets to output-based targets (*eg* how many unemployed people have been found jobs as the result of advisory interviews). These targets are published in an Annual Performance Agreement. According to the *Employment Gazette* (April 1991) during 1989-90 placing performance declined 13 per cent against a 14 per cent decline in vacancies.

Since the 1970s and prior to acquiring agency status, Jobcentres and Unemployment Benefit Offices were in separate locations. The rationale behind this was the idea that the Jobcentre was available to

all jobseekers, and not just the unemployed. This would then increase the number of vacancies received by the Jobcentre. However, this policy was criticised since it broke the link between jobsearch advice and the payment of unemployment benefit, and it placed too much confidence in the ability of the unemployed to make best use of the placement service (Disney *et al.* 1992).

However, since acquiring agency status the local office network has changed considerably. Jobcentres and Unemployment Benefit Offices are being brought together to give clients access through 'One Stop Shops' to the full range of Employment Services and programmes (*Framework for Change, 1990*). It is hoped that this will be completed by the mid 1990s when there will be 1,100 to 1,200 Employment Service Jobcentres. This is also considered necessary to restore the diminished contact between Jobcentres and the unemployed.

The Employment Service outputs are also to be unit costed to enable the Employment Service to 'assess' the efficiency of its main programmes and services and provide the basis of an improved resource allocation system to serve the best match between outputs and resources (*Employment Gazette*, April 1991). This should help see how cost effective its programmes are and also help its ability to respond flexibly to local needs.

The Employment Service is also in the process of changing its personnel policies. It intends to recruit locally directly at Executive Officer level, and it is helping managers run their own recruiting programmes to allow them more control in employing the most suitable people for jobs. In this way it hopes they will acquire a greater personnel interest in the success of the people they employ under the Revenue Generation Scheme. The Employment Service will also be able to charge employers for extra job placing or counselling services *eg* when there are large scale redundancies.

The Employment Service is trying to improve their quality of service with booklets providing advice, and the Jobseekers charter which asks people 'to help us to get it right and how to complain if you think something is wrong', as well as the carrying out of Customer Satisfaction and Staff Surveys.

The Employment Department is required by the Treasury to evaluate the absolute and relative effectiveness of its special programme measures. This can involve both evaluation of pilot measures as well as proper programmes. (The results of several evaluations are discussed later.) This evaluation is either carried out internally or externally using research agencies

Back to work teams

During 1993/1994, the Employment Service Local Offices are introducing Back to Work Teams. The main aim is to give clients advisory contacts which are more effectively targeted and build on each other in a systematic way (*Back to Work Teams* Booklet), *ie* achieving better liaison between the people working in a local office.

Back to Work Teams can take many different forms but their basis is that they should involve a mixture of Executive Officers and Administrative Officers working together. This means Back to Work Teams are trying to create improved co-operation and exchange of information between advisers and Signing Officers and potentially many other parts of the office. The basic minimum, however, for a Back to Work Team is that it should take responsibility for new claims, active signing and the Restart interview programme.

It is intended that this team approach will make it possible to carry out more systematic and thorough checks on clients' benefit obligations, and target resources and help on the individuals who need it the most. It is hoped that clients will be able to develop a more businesslike and detailed relationship with the team members who will see them at most of their visits to the office.

It is intended that Back to Work Teams will help increase job satisfaction for people working in the team by giving them responsibility for several aspects of the client's claim rather than a narrowly defined role, allowing them to develop a fuller relationship with the client and having the opportunity to develop different skills and knowledge. It is hoped, in turn, that this will lead to increased customer satisfaction. The central objectives are to contribute to the outputs and targets agreed, by firstly helping people back to work, directly on to programmes or training, or indirectly by advising and improving their jobsearch methods and skills.

5.4 Description and evaluation of institutional programmes

In the remainder of this chapter, we discuss how the various programmes and procedures, evolved to manage the unemployed flow, impact on jobsearch activities. Most of it will already be very familiar to the Employment Service (ES) readers, and it is included here mainly to catalogue the several different initiatives for the benefit of the more general reader.

Back to Work Plans

At their new claims interview all clients agree, with an adviser, a Back to Work Plan (BTWP) which shows a job goal and a number of steps which, if taken, will offer the best prospects of returning to work. BTWPs should flow from an advisory interview which examines employment history and expectations, assets and barriers to work and all available options. It represents a mutually agreed action plan for jobsearch which can be reviewed and built upon at later stages of unemployment. BTWPs are considered a fundamental part of the structured and coherent advisory and information service, provided by Back to Work Teams, to help people back to work. They also help ES advisers make sure that clients remain eligible for payment of benefit by being available for and actively seeking work. A copy of the plan is given to the client and stapled inside their UB40/UBL18 'Information for Clients' booklet.

A small scale evaluation by the Employment Service Management Services (1993) reported that counsellors had little regard for the importance of BTWPs and clients advised that they provided no added value to their jobsearch activity. The study went on to say that the major influencing factor over this was the attitude of the advisers.

13 Week Review

After three months an unemployed person receives an invitation to come in to the Jobcentre and review and update the Back to Work Plan. The unemployed may also be offered an interview with an adviser who gives information on local job markets, as well as advice on local employers who have vacancies. Referral to Jobsearch Seminars and Job Review Workshops also takes place at this stage.

Job Review Workshops

These workshops are available for those people who have been out of work for over three months and are intended to be used by people who are thinking about changing direction and looking for a new job. Job Review Workshops are primarily aimed at people who are from an administrative, professional or executive background, and last for two days.

People attending these workshops use a special computer guidance program designed to match working preferences to jobs, and are also able to carry out research on any new options that interest them.

In 1992/93, 42,000 people attended workshops. Workshops are run on behalf of the Employment Service by organisations from the private, public and voluntary sectors.

Job Search Seminars

These seminars are available to those who have been out of work and receiving benefit for three months. They provide advice and guidance on how and where to look for a job, as well as information on other help that is available locally. Jobsearch seminars take place over four days spread over five weeks.

The seminars also provide resources such as stamps, telephones, and photocopiers free of charge to help participants put into practice what is learnt on the seminar. Ninety thousand people took part in Job Search Seminars in 1991.

The Restart Programme

Restart is, as its title suggests, intended to give clients an opportunity to have a fresh look at their situation and get people back to work as quickly as possible. After six months, and for every six months after that, every unemployed person is asked to attend an interview to discuss their situation and the options available. Back to Work Plans are updated in the Restart interviews and, where possible, the same member of the Back to Work team will see the client every time (*Back to Work Teams* document 1993).

Restart interviews often involve the unemployed being offered a place on a training programme, a selection of jobs to apply for, a place in a Jobclub, Jobplan Workshop, an interview through the Job Interview Guarantee (JIG), the chance of becoming self employed or receiving temporary work. Because of the varied amount of programmes and opportunities Restart can lead to, it is often thought of as a gateway programme.

The Restart programme was introduced nationally in July 1986, representing a major extension of the work with long term unemployed people, with everyone registered for over six months being invited for interviews. By 1988/89 over three million interviews had been carried out. One of the reasons it was introduced was because of the criticisms that the benefit system was failing to carry out its responsibilities for enforcing work disciplines on unemployed claimants (White 1991).

Since Restart is a long running programme and has been claimed to have made a significant decrease in unemployment, there have been several attempts to measure the combined Restart effect and 'decompose this into individual effects' (Disney *et al.*). Official figures suggest that approximately 20 per cent of those who attend Restart interviews subsequently leave the unemployment register and that the effects of Restart are long-term.

A study carried out by Gregg (1989), used regression techniques to examine the relationship between employment and registered unemployment, from 1974 to the first quarter of 1988. He also examined the role of other variables such as real wages and demographic variables. In this study, Gregg found the Restart effect significant, with the programme raising the outflow from unemployment by 11 per cent per quarter. However, he cautioned that the results were affected by the quality of the unemployment data, which over the course of time have been subject to many revisions.

Another study by Dicks and Hatch (1989) used a similar approach, again using regression techniques, but including variables such as sectoral unemployment, sex, and full and part time distinctions. They estimated that the effect of Restart has been to accelerate the flow out of unemployment by between 11 per cent and 19 per cent. Dicks and Hatch were also concerned at the fact that the tougher rules of having to be 'actively seeking work' under Social Security Act 1991, may have been having an effect on their results, and point out that the effects of Restart are unlikely to be sustained into the future because the client group will get smaller and because the remainder would include people who have already had several Restart interviews.

A more comprehensive study was carried out in 1992 by Michael White and Jane Lakey using control groups. In this study they found that Restart helped individuals leave unemployment more quickly than they otherwise would have done. They found that this success was achieved by Restart acting as a gateway to a wide range of opportunities for the long term unemployed. However, they did not find that Restart increased the amount of jobsearch on the part of the long term unemployed.

Restart Courses

Restart Courses, launched as part of the Restart Programme, are aimed at people unemployed for six months or more who may have great difficulty in securing a job or a place on an employment or training programme. The courses, which are run by external organisations, normally last for one or two weeks. They aim to re-build confidence and improve motivation, identify skills and strengths, give advice about employment training and other available opportunities.

Since December 1990, people unemployed for two years or more, who at their Restart interview refuse to consider or take up a place on an Employment Department training or employment programme, have been directed to attend a Restart Course. Those who fail to attend or do not complete the course may lose a proportion of their personal Income Support for a period of time equivalent to the length of the course. In 1992/3, 125,800 people attended courses.

Jobclubs

Jobclubs were introduced in the United Kingdom in 1984. Originally piloted from 200 jobclubs, there are now over 1,300 in the UK. The aim of Jobclubs is to help members find the best possible job in the shortest possible time by giving the support and encouragement that is often needed.

Jobclubs are for people who have been out of work for six months or more or are at a disadvantage in the labour market — such as people with disabilities or ex-offenders. There is a group mix with a wide range of clients from different backgrounds and abilities. Those in most need of extra help can attend supportive Jobclubs (see below).

Jobclubs are usually open for four half days a week and training is given in jobsearch skills, including telephone and interview techniques. Resources are also provided such as telephones, stamps stationery, typewriter, photocopiers.

The role of the Jobclub leader is very important: they are expected to create a positive business-like atmosphere and be able to facilitate group support. Jobclubs are run in Jobcentres or by private organisations under contract.

A Jobclub will have about 25 members at any one time, and there are fresh intakes of about 12 members every three weeks. Members of Jobclubs can usually expect to follow up a high number of job leads every day.

There have been several evaluations of Jobclubs. The official Employment Service indicator of Jobclub performance is the Job Entry Rate (JER), which is the proportion of Jobclub members in any given period leaving to enter jobs.

Demery (1988) found that 55 per cent of people leaving Jobclubs during a six month period entered employment, and a further 16 per cent went into self employment, full time education or training.

However, only 58 per cent of these jobs were full time or permanent. Demery attributes this to labour market conditions rather than any deficiency on the part of the Jobclub. Hales and Russell (1989) found that half of the people attending Jobclubs felt they had increased their chances of finding a job, and were also more likely to accept a wide range of jobs. They also found that leaving a Jobclub for a job peaked after about three weeks.

The skills and abilities of the Jobclub leader determine how successful a Job Club can be. Mitchell (1989) found that the way in which a leader responded to the range of tasks involved in running a Jobclub had an impact on their members' abilities to effectively search for and find work. The more successful leaders were more likely to be Job Search specialists and be experienced in using effective operating strategies.

Supportive Jobclubs

Supportive Jobclubs are for people who face particular difficulties in finding work, need more support than is available in a standard Jobclub and require a high level of individual attention. Currently there are between 75 and 85 in operation.

These were found to be as successful in placing people directly into employment and achieving the same numbers of placings as standard Jobclubs despite the fact that the clients are disadvantaged in the labour market. This additional help is required for clients to have a chance of achieving the same outcomes as those of mainstream clients. The current limit for a stay in a supportive Jobclub is 13 weeks. However, Rick (1993) reports that Jobclub leaders would prefer to extend this time period in order to establish greater rapport with clients and to include activities such as accompanying them to interviews.

Job Interview Guarantee (JIG)

JIG is a technique to match the unemployed person with an employer who wants them. There are many different options under JIG, including matching and screening of recruits, job preparation courses, work trials, adopted jobclubs and customised training, all of which will be discussed below. Like so many of the programmes, JIG is available for those who have been out of work for more than six months, although there are exemptions for those rejoining the labour market, people leaving employment training and ex-offenders.

The government have announced that in 1993/1994 JIG will almost double in size with an extra 108,000 places being added to the 124,000 already planned for 1992/1993. 20,000 of these opportunities will be in work trials. JIG was launched as a pilot in 1989 and extended as a national programme in 1991. It is intended to break down employer resistance to recruiting the long term unemployed, with a package of recruitment options which can be used on their own or in combination. In return for this service the employer guarantees an interview to those unemployed applicants who are submitted to them.

In May 1992 the JIG programme was extensively evaluated by the British Market Research Bureau Limited, involving contacts with people who had partaken in schemes and employers who had been involved. They found that 35 per cent of the sample had been offered a job as a result of JIG. Only 60 per cent of these were permanent and 40 per cent of the jobs involved working unsocial hours. Additionally two thirds of those respondents who were unsuccessful at their interviews, did not get any feedback, and would have liked some.

The principal element of JIG is that of matching and screening. This is where potential unemployed job applicants are screened and matched to the characteristics emphasised by the employer's job description. These applicants are then guaranteed an interview. Only 35 per cent of employers, according to the BMRB survey, knew that they were on this scheme. However, 40 per cent of the employers agreed that there had been a real improvement in the standard of candidates sent by the Jobcentre.

Job Preparation Courses last for a week and are intended to be used to improve self confidence, make improvements in interview technique, reassess skills and strengths, increase awareness of in-work benefits, and make sure that the course attenders are aware what is expected by the employer in the workplace as well at the interview (MORI, 1993). Employers found these courses beneficial since they covered topics directly useful to the employer (Finn, 1993). The MORI survey found that most participants reported that they achieved all the above objectives on Job Preparation Courses. However, they also found that care should be taken to ensure that the interview is truly guaranteed.

Work trials are used when there is an element of doubt about the suitability of a candidate for a job, and so the participant works for an employer for three weeks and is then guaranteed an interview at the end of the trial period. During this time the unemployed person is still paid their benefit. The BMRB evaluation found that the main problems with this aspect of JIG were related to the performance of applicants. However, attitudes of participants were generally favourable and most of the employers found the work trials extremely useful.

Adopting a Jobclub is a scheme whereby an employer 'adopts' a Jobclub and offers to interview all its participants. However, the BMRB survey carried a survey of employers and found that they viewed this aspect of JIG negatively.

Employment on Trial

If a person leaves a job because they decide it is not suitable for them, then they may not be entitled to unemployment benefit for six months. However, with employment on trial, anyone who has been out of work for more than six months can try out a job, without risk of being disqualified from their benefit entitlement if they decide the job is not for them. The only condition attached to this is that the person must stay in the job for between six and 12 weeks. This is

directly linked to the 'Employment on Trial' regulations introduced with the 1989 Social Security Act (Finn, 1993)

Job Plan Workshops

Job Plan Workshops are designed primarily for people who have been signing on for a year. People who turn down places on government funded schemes may also be asked to attend.

The Job Plan Workshop is a one week informal workshop with other unemployed people to give participants a chance to match their skills and strengths to the local labour market. The idea behind this is to help the long term unemployed reconsider what type of job they really want and are suitable for, and to help them set clear achievable goals. This is done using a four and a half day initial workshop with a follow-up half day a few weeks later. The workshops are run by specialist public, private, and voluntary organisations under contract to the Employment Service. Participants are interviewed by workshop leaders who use a computer program to match their skills to possible jobs or careers. At the end of the workshop everyone takes home an action plan and also has priority access to other programmes.

People who fail to attend the Job Plan Workshops may lose benefit equal to the time that would have been spent attending the workshop.

Over the next few years the government hopes to provide guidance and assessment in Job Plan Workshops for up to approximately 300,000 long term unemployed a year.

Workstart

Workstart was announced in the March 1993 budget. It is to be piloted in Summer 1993 at a cost of £2.6 million. It will profile 1,000 long-term unemployed in four areas: East Kent, Tyneside, South and South-West London, Devon and Cornwall. In this scheme, employers will be asked to take on people who have been unemployed for two to four years, in permanent jobs so long as that person represents an addition to an employer's workforce. Recruits will receive the normal rate of pay and the Government will pay a subsidy to the employer decreasing over time. The final evaluation of these pilots will be carried out by the Employment Department.

In advance of these pilots, the Employment Policy Institute in its Economic Report: *Making Workstart Work*, thought that 'Workstart represents a worthwhile addition to the armoury of active labour market policies'. The Employment Institute goes on to suggest that linking it to Job Interview Guarantee schemes would increase the attractiveness and effectiveness of the Workstart subsidy. The components of JIG could restore the confidence of the potential beneficiaries of Workstart and bring them into contact with possible employers before the subsidy is offered. This would remove any employer doubts about hiring, and improve the person's self assurance so that they could hold down a job.

6. International Perspectives on Assisted Jobsearch

This chapter examines what public employment services do to help people find jobs in other countries. The active labour market policies of most countries involve a wide range of interventions which include training programmes and work experience schemes. Jobsearch generally plays an important role in such measures and this chapter will focus on this aspect of policy. The amount of detailed information available varies from country to country but where possible this review will aim to cover:

- what type of help with jobsearch is available
- who gets help
- how welfare benefits and jobsearch assistance are related, and
- how effective is the help provided.

Much of the interest in comparative reviews of policy lies in the potential for transferring examples of 'best practice'. While it is important to be aware of initiatives in other countries, the cultural context in which these measures may have developed limit their appropriateness in other countries with different traditions.

6.1 Jobsearch in the USA

Attitudes to welfare provision in the United States are generally hostile. Rather than the more European concept of welfare as a safety net for those who need it, the Americans tend to see benefits as a disincentive to work which destroy the energy and initiative of their recipients. As a consequence welfare is only available to those most in need and the emphasis of jobsearch assistance is on reducing this welfare dependency and saving taxpayers' money.

General provision

The system of work-welfare measures in the United States is characterised by a wide diversity of programmes. The pluralism of the US system allows individual states to organise their own provision within loosely set Federal guidelines.

There is no universal unemployment assistance in the US, although there is unemployment insurance for those who are eligible. Those registering for benefit must show evidence of jobsearch at their local employment office. Insurance benefits last for only six months (occasionally extended to nine months in periods of high

unemployment), so there is a strong incentive to find work before benefits expire. For this reason there is comparatively little long-term unemployment recorded in the US.

The US Department of Labor at federal level funds individual states to provide employment services. There are 2,600 local Employment Service offices which offer counselling interviews and job placement. However, most vacancies are not notified to the Employment Service and two thirds of job placements take place outside such formal channels (Layard and Philpott, 1991). Evidence of jobsearch activity is required by the Employment Service or benefits are curtailed but intensive help with job placement is not necessary because of the finite nature of unemployment benefit. This is considered an adequate incentive in itself.

Help with finding employment is focused instead on those receiving income support in the form of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). AFDC provides assistance to families with children who are deprived of parental support. In practice these are usually single parent families with a female head of household. AFDC is funded jointly by federal and state agencies. Since the 1960s, states have been allowed to extend the AFDC to families with an unemployed breadwinner (AFDC-U) but by 1987 only 26 states had done so (Walker, 1991). Help for the old, the blind and the disabled comes from the federally administered Supplemental Security Income (SSI) system. Recipients of AFDC and SSI are also eligible for the Food Stamp programme.

Jobsearch assistance is generally aimed at long-term recipients of AFDC and Food Stamps. Since the 1960s those collecting AFDC benefits have been subject to the Work Incentive Program (WIN) which aims to place those on welfare in jobs or training schemes. Under this program AFDC recipients can be required to participate in individual or group jobsearch for 16 weeks during the first year and for eight weeks per year after that. Since individual states design their own WIN schemes, the actual content and scope of programs is widely divergent. Food Stamp agencies can also establish their own workfare schemes and by 1986 40 States had a jobsearch programme for Food Stamp recipients.

Criticism of the rather piecemeal approach to welfare in the 1980s led to the Family Support Act in 1988. This gives a more coherent approach to the WIN measures by requiring all states set up a Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program (JOBS) by 1992. States will still be able to design their own schemes but they must contain elements of education, job skills training, job development and placement schemes. The exact nature and effectiveness of these new schemes has not yet been assessed.

Actual spend and coverage

Despite the US commitment to get welfare recipients into work, the resources devoted to this task are rather limited. Expenditure on measures to help those on welfare to get jobs is much lower than in most European countries. The US spends only 0.14 per cent of GDP

compared with 0.33 per cent in Britain and 0.57 per cent in Germany (Layard and Philpott, 1991). Further, despite concern over increasing numbers claiming welfare benefits, federal funds for the WIN program fell to $200 million in 1986, a third of their 1979 level (Burtless, 1992).

All states are required to have a WIN programme by law, but the actual availability of assistance with jobsearch is restricted. For example, although 22 states had a Job Search programme (43 per cent of the total) this served only 30 per cent of the counties within those states. Similarly, while 73 per cent of all states had a Job Search scheme related to Food Stamp provision, only 36 per cent of the public assistance caseload lived in counties where such a scheme existed (Walker, 1991). So coverage of work welfare programmes is not as extensive as initially appears and help is far from comprehensive.

The extent to which these schemes are mandatory varies considerably. Failure to co-operate with job search can mean withdrawal of benefits but in some states programmes are entirely voluntary *eg* Massachussetts, Tennessee and Vermont.

Jobsearch is a major component of most back to work schemes and most participants receive some help with finding work. For example, 53 per cent of those involved in WIN programmes in 1985 had some help with individual jobsearch and a similar proportion participated in group jobsearch activities. The prevalence of jobsearch initiatives is partly a matter of finance: the average classroom or on-the-job training scheme costs about $3,000 per participant, whereas jobsearch assistance costs only $200 per participant.

Examples of jobsearch programmes

Some States have instigated relatively simple WIN schemes characterised by low cost and limited scope with an emphasis on self-help rather than professional assistance. An example of this approach is the Independent Jobsearch Scheme in Cook County, Illinois. This involved a mandatory but self-directed jobsearch lasting two months and was cheap to administer, costing only $150 per participant. The main goal of the programme was to reduce the numbers receiving welfare and in this respect it was successful. Evaluative research by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation found that although there was only a very small decrease in the numbers receiving AFDC, the amounts each received dropped significantly. On average the taxpayer gained over $300 per participant from the scheme compared with a control group.

A more ambitious approach to work-welfare is that adopted in San Diego. This involved a three week jobsearch workshop which included instruction on jobsearch methods and self-directed jobsearch within a group setting. Those who did not find work by this method went on compulsory work experience in public sector and voluntary organisations. The scheme applied to only a minority of claimants (only 45 per cent of these participated in any part of the scheme) but those who did take part were successful in increasing their incomes.

For those who only participated in the jobsearch, earnings increased by an average of $250 and benefits were reduced by just over $200. After allowing for the costs of the programme, which were significantly higher than those of the Illinois scheme, the San Diego programme led to an eight per cent reduction in welfare costs.

Although this chapter focuses primarily on government initiatives to help individuals to find employment, the US can also provide examples of joint schemes between employers who are laying off staff and government agencies. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) is a federal agency providing economic development programmes and employing 20,000 people. When they needed to downsize in 1991 they set up an Employee Transition Program providing facilities, counselling and help with jobsearch. Alternatively, staff were eligible to receive loans to set up their own small businesses from the TVA's Small Business Loan Program (Solomon, 1992). Many large US corporations including Brown and Williamson Tobacco Corporation, Firestone Tire, Ford Motor and AT&T have implemented similar schemes to help employees they have made redundant. Professional help with job seeking and the setting up of job clubs play an important part in these programmes. The US government takes a substantial role in financing these schemes: it contributed $4 million to the Ford programme which was more than the company itself spent, a pattern repeated in other schemes (Forbes, 1987).

How effective is help with jobsearch?

Most of the American schemes have been evaluated by MDRC on a cost-benefit model. From this it can be seen quite clearly that most of the programmes were successful in increasing the earnings of the participants. This was particularly the case with those schemes which relied heavily on jobsearch assistance (Burtless, 1992). Programmes without jobsearch were the least successful in placing those on benefits in work. However, this in part reflects the orientation of such programmes to the more job-ready participants. Most of the gains from these schemes were primarily to the taxpayer. Welfare recipients often significantly raised their earnings but lost almost equivalent sums from their benefits.

In terms of raising poor families towards the poverty line, the schemes are less successful. Burtless reckons that the average earnings gain of those participating in work programs is less than a third of what is needed for benefit recipients to reach the official poverty line. In other words, those who find jobs tend to find low paid jobs which reduce their benefits but which fail to substantially increase their income above its original level. The schemes do save money for the taxpayer, however, and in this sense they can be judged effective. Help with jobsearch does get more people into jobs, therefore, but the quality of these jobs is open to question.

There is extensive help with jobsearch in the US with a wide variety of schemes available in different states. These programmes do not aim at universal coverage but are focused on welfare recipients, the majority of whom are single parent families. Jobsearch assistance is, therefore, closely connected to benefit receipt. The effectiveness of the

programmes varies but help with job search does appear to get better results than other forms of intervention.

6.2 Jobsearch in Europe

Most European countries have a more comprehensive welfare network than that which exists in the USA. Unemployment Insurance lasts for a longer period and benefit assistance is available for those who do not qualify for insurance. Long term unemployment is also higher in Europe than in America and for this reason the focus of active labour market policy is different. Government agencies aim to help unemployed jobseekers and, in particular, to prevent the increase in long term unemployment. Spending on active labour market policies is much higher in Europe than in the US, reflecting this wider scope.

Germany

Responsibility for assistance with jobsearch lies with the Federal Employment Service, the Bundesanstalt fur Arbeit. This is a self-governing body with representatives of employees, employers and public bodies taking a role in administering policy. The expenditure of the Bundesanstalt is funded largely by contributions levied on employees and employers. The Federal Employment Service has a wide range of roles, from administering unemployment insurance and assistance, to more active policies such as job creation and vocational training. In this sense, German labour market policy is very different from the British system as all these active and passive functions are dealt with by the same institution. In Britain responsibility is divided between the Department of Employment and the Department of Social Security, amongst others (Disney *et al.*, 1992).

Germany is unusual among European countries in spending considerably more on job placement services than on the administration of unemployment benefits (Layard and Philpott, 1991). Unlike Britain which spends exactly the same proportion of GDP (0.7 per cent) on these items, Germany spends almost twice as much on placement (0.15 per cent of GDP) as on administration of benefits.

This relatively generous funding reflects the high quality of service provided by the Bundesanstalt. There are 146 main local employment offices and 483 smaller offices. Services are provided free to employers and jobseekers. The 26,000 officials who offer placement and counselling services must all have a professional qualification. There is also extensive training for staff within the service.

Attempts are made to make the employment offices amenable to users with evening opening, appointments for consultations and telephone information systems. For this reason the service is widely used by professionals as well as the less skilled. The service also provides vocational guidance and counselling to those of all ages, whether employed or not. The number of jobseekers using the job placement

services has steadily increased since 1982 as has the number of vacancies notified and the number of placements made (Disney *et al.*, 1992).

In addition to the provisions described above, the local employment offices arrange Group Information Sessions for employed and unemployed job seekers giving information about jobsearch and job application techniques. These workshops also cover vocational training opportunities and attempt to motivate participants to take these up (MISEP 40, 1992).

Many of those looking for a job prefer the independence of a self service system. Germany now has a nationwide Job Information Service through which jobseekers can sift through available vacancies at their own pace. The vacancies are presented on VDU screens with full details of the employer and telephones are provided so that the employer can be contacted direct. The system has proved popular with employers and jobseekers during pilot projects and vacancies are filled faster. The duration of unemployment is also shortened by this method. The self-service approach is not intended to replace the existing placement procedure but to complement it. Job counselling is still available to those who require it (MISEP 37, 1992).

The unification of East and West Germany has increased demand on the employment services. A high number of young jobseekers in the new federal states are using the counselling services offered by the government agencies for information and advice on vocational issues. Additional Careers Information Centres are being set up in the new federal states to cope with this demand.

As well as information about vacancies and vocational guidance, the German system also has a range of subsidies to jobseekers which aim to help with jobsearch and increase job mobility. The Bundestanstalt can offer help with the cost of job applications, travel costs to interviews (and in some cases for regular work itself), work clothes and equipment, removal expenses, separation allowances and bridging allowances for those waiting for a pay packet. This variety of tools allows the employment service to minimise the obstacles facing benefit claimants who would like to take up job offers but have few resources to do so. In practice, most payments are made for travelling expenses and job application costs.

Help with jobsearch and placement in Germany is one plank in a range of active labour market policies dominated by job creation and vocational training programmes. In terms of expenditure, Germany spends a larger proportion of GDP on placement than other European countries (0.15 per cent) but a still larger proportion is spent on Adult Training (0.23 per cent) and on subsidised employment (0.19 per cent) (Layard and Philpott, 1992). There have been some evaluations of the job creation and training schemes but none specifically focusing on jobsearch assistance. Since the placement services are available to all those who require them, it would be difficult to find an appropriate control group (who did not use the services) for comparison purposes. Similarly, the increase in numbers of people finding jobs is subject to so many external factors that it is hard to isolate help with jobsearch as an independent variable.

Germany provides an extensive range of measures to help the unemployed to find jobs. The employment service is well organised and the staff are well trained. The only evaluative criteria available, however, is the increasing use of the service and the rising number of placements (Disney *et al.*, 1992). These seem to indicate that the service works efficiently and that unemployment is lessened by their existence.

France

In France there are a number of institutions which are together responsible for labour market policy. The employment ministry (Délégation à l'Emploi) works with the ANPE (National Employment Agency) and the AFPA (the Association for Adult Vocational Training) to assist those without jobs. Unemployment insurance is dealt with separately by two agencies: UNEDIC and ASSEDIC. These agencies co-operate with ANPE which is responsible for employment placement at its 700 local employment offices.

Welfare benefits are complex but basically entail a contributory insurance scheme for those who are eligible, with means-tested benefits for those without entitlement. Recipients are expected to undertake training or participate in work programmes where requested, and benefits can be withdrawn if claimants do not co-operate. Those who do not attend interviews with ANPE to assist them with finding a solution to unemployment will be refused further benefits.

Concern over high unemployment levels has led to a number of new initiatives by ANPE in recent years. However, expenditure on placement activities in France is low compared with other countries. France spent only 0.05 per cent of GDP on placement in 1989, less than the figure for the UK. Similarly the ratio of employment office staff to unemployed jobseekers was relatively low at 1:200 (Layard and Philpott, 1991). Despite this, progress has been made in updating ANPE's employment offices, starting up jobclubs, and interviewing long-term unemployed people with a view to finding new employment directions for them.

In 1989 ANPE began setting up an extended programme of jobclubs, following the success of pilot projects in three regions. The jobclub provides a way of increasing the placement chances of those who need more intensive help with their jobsearch. It is aimed at those who are long-term unemployed and are likely to be over 25 years old. The jobclub provides not only facilities for jobseekers (such as telephones, photocopiers and secretarial services) and a supportive social network, but also coaching sessions for job-hunting techniques. Each session has between ten and 15 participants from different social and occupational backgrounds. They undergo an intensive learning programme oriented towards jobsearch and also spend up to 80 hours putting this knowledge into practice by applying for jobs. The expansion of the jobclub scheme is to be closely monitored and evaluated, but results have not yet been presented (MISEP 25, 1989).

Between February and October 1992, the Employment Service conducted 'Programme 900,000' which involved extensive in-depth interviewing of the long term unemployed. The interviews provided the employment service with the opportunity to offer LTUs job offers, places on training schemes or community work. More than a million jobseekers were interviewed in the nine month period. This programme led to significant reductions in those on the unemployment register especially among those out of work for over three years. This group fell from 199,000 in December 1991 to 168,000 in October 1992 (MISEP 41, 1993).

It is estimated that without 'Programme 900,000' the level of unemployment would have been 120,000 higher, but comparatively few of those interviewed were actually placed in jobs as a result of the scheme (185,000 out of a total 1,030,000 interviewed). Nevertheless, the interviews allowed contact to be reestablished with those who had little involvement with the employment service over a long period.

In recent years France has updated its approach to jobsearch and made efforts to combat long term unemployment. However, these initiatives are hampered by the comparatively low level of investment in staffing of the public employment service. This means that intensive help for individual jobseekers is not available on a routine basis.

Belgium

Belgium has had a high rate of unemployment in recent years. Between 1983 and 1988 it averaged 11.3 per cent, higher than all other European countries except Ireland and Spain. However, Belgium also spends a relatively generous amount on active labour market policies.

The main agency for implementing labour market policies is the VDAB (Flemish Office of Employment and Vocational Training), although other departments are also involved. FOREM (Community and Regional Vocational Training and Employment Service) participates in Jobclubs and Supervision Plans along with ORBEM (Brussels Regional Employment Office). The main initiatives involving voluntary participation are Jobclubs and the Back-to-Work (Weer-werk) scheme.

Jobclubs in Belgium follow a similar pattern to those in other European countries. Unemployed people are eligible to join after one year of unemployment. Participants are helped to organise their jobsearch activities effectively and learn how to prepare a CV, identify suitable vacancies, practice interview techniques and can discuss any problems with the supervisor. There are 18 jobclubs in the Flemish community with 12-15 members in each group. The programme is relatively short, with a new group recruited every three weeks. Since the jobclubs were set up in 1987 until the end of 1990 there were 4,720 members, 57 per cent of whom found work after two months and 64 per cent found work within a year. This indicates the success of the scheme but the limited coverage due to voluntary participation may mean that only the most motivated took part.

The Back-to-Work scheme is aimed at the same group, those unemployed for over a year. It involves intensive individual guidance by a placement counsellor which extends over a long period. Since 1991, the Weer-werk plan has been available from 16 sub-regional employment services. Each Weer-werk team employs five vocational counsellors and an administrative assistant. The initial interview for the Weer-werk scheme is informal to reduce the anxieties of those attending. The personal approach means that the vocational counsellor can direct the participant towards real employment opportunities and give information on training opportunities. The vocational counsellor maintains contact with the client and there is a follow up after actions have been taken. By 1990, 3,000 LTUs had participated in the scheme, 70 per cent of whom were women. Twenty three per cent of these had found work in the private sector, and 21 per cent were doing vocational training.

Belgium also has a compulsory scheme called the Supervision Plan which affects those who have been unemployed for more than nine months. The unemployed person is invited to an interview at the regional employment office. The individual claimant's situation is examined and opportunities for employment or training are discussed. From this interview, an action plan is drawn up which can include careers guidance, vocational training or assistance with placement. Those who do not cooperate with the plan are refused further benefits (MISEP 40, 1992).

Active labour market policies in Belgium are intensive for those unemployed for more than one year, but it is not clear whether these facilities are available in all areas. The voluntary nature of such help is likely to appeal to those who are not already demotivated by lack of success in the job market. Resources to help the unemployed are available, however, and the existing schemes claim a considerable degree of success.

Spain

Spain has experienced very high rates of unemployment during the 1980s, averaging 19.8 per cent between 1983 and 1988. Since then the unemployment rate has fallen back from over twenty per cent in 1986 to sixteen per cent in 1991 (OECD 1992). The Spanish government spends a very low amount per unemployed person on active labour market interventions (2.1 per cent of GDP per worker) as compared to countries like Germany (which spends 10.4 percent of GDP per worker) (Layard and Philpott, 1991).

Private employment agencies are not allowed to operate and employers are legally obliged to notify vacancies to the public employment service. Although this is not always enforced, it does mean that the employment service has a monopoly as employment agency. The employment office is also used to register a new contract of work and so many clients are not really jobseekers at all. There are 675 district offices of the employment service with an average of eleven staff each. The Spanish employment department has a high concentration of staff at regional level (44 per cent compared to 48 per

cent at local level) but this is due to the siting of computers which will shortly be devolved to local offices along with the staff.

In Spain, the initial interview of an unemployed client is the main activity of the employment service. The information gathered from this interview records the individual's skills and abilities and these are computer coded for job matching. After this there is a regular signing on every three months, but apart from this there is little contact with clients. Clients can be notified of vacancies by mail. Those registered for over a year now receive a follow up interview which aims to encourage the unemployed to find jobs on their own. Those in need of special help can attend a three day jobsearch course run by staff in the local employment office. These courses are for groups of fifteen people and are not aimed at all registered clients but only a small proportion of them.

In general, the emphasis of labour market policy in Spain has been on training and on private sector contracts offering training and work experience. The public employment service spends little time on placing the unemployed into unsubsidised jobs. This has given Spain a better trained workforce but the continued high level of unemployment may necessitate a stronger emphasis on jobsearch assistance in future years.

6.3 Jobsearch in Sweden

The Swedish approach to jobsearch differs from those discussed above both in the resources directed towards this and the intensive, pro-active intervention that is used to help the unemployed to find jobs. This takes place in a context of low unemployment: those out of work have rarely risen above three per cent of the total workforce since 1970 and in 1991 the rate of unemployment was 2.7 per cent (OECD, 1992). Nevertheless, spending on active labour market policies in Sweden is higher as a percentage of GDP than in any other OECD country at 2.07 per cent (OECD, 1992: Table 2.B.1).

It can be argued that Sweden is able to maintain this level of spending because its unemployment rate is so low, *ie* because expenditure on benefits takes up less of the total budget. Alternatively, it could be suggested that the high level of investment in active labour market measures keeps unemployment low. The causal connections are hard to isolate but a brief examination of the type of help offered to jobseekers in Sweden indicates what can be done given a high level of resources.

Welfare benefits

Assistance to the unemployed in Sweden is very generous to those who qualify for Unemployment Insurance (80 per cent of the workforce). Recipients may claim 90 per cent of their previous earnings up to a maximum amount. However, these benefits are only available for a comparatively short period — there is no possibility

of staying on these benefits indefinitely. Benefits last only fourteen months and are subject to a strict work test.

The employment office provides a list of available vacancies and, if offered a job, the unemployed person must accept it as long as it pays at least 90 per cent of their benefit. This may involve taking a post in a different occupation or in a different area of the country. Failure to accept a job or a training scheme leads to loss of benefit for four weeks and if three offers are refused benefit can be cancelled.

Help for jobseekers

The placement and counselling assistance offered in Sweden is very expensive to provide. It costs over three times as much as the British system (Layard and Philpott, 1991). The workload of the placement officer is on average 35 clients compared to 177 in Britain. This enables the provision of personal placement officers who help their clients until they find a job. This approach seems to be effective as only three per cent of the unemployed still have no job after 14 months in Sweden, considerably less than in other countries.

The Swedish placement service relies heavily on computers to record vacancies and about 65 per cent of vacancies are registered with the employment service. The placement officer also has a caseload of firms who provide information about jobs available. Unemployed people can use the computer terminals themselves in many areas. This national system means that suitable jobs in other areas can be accessed very quickly and that people needing jobs can be matched with vacancies efficiently. The computer system costs £16 million per year to run.

If an unemployed person cannot be found a job through the computer system, there are other avenues to pursue. Mobility grants are available to enable people to move to other areas for work. The costs of both interviews and removal can be met. Training is another area taken very seriously in Sweden. Those who have obsolete skills due to industrial changes are offered retraining. The courses are of a very high quality for adults and cost more per participant than a university place. Six months after these courses 70 per cent have found employment and 20 per cent have taken further training (Layard and Philpott, 1991).

Once unemployment insurance is exhausted an unemployed person may take up a temporary public appointment which lasts six months and is paid at the full rate. Although a legal entitlement, this option is not widely taken up.

How effective is help with jobsearch?

As Layard and Philpott point out, there has, in fact, been little in the way of evaluation studies of Swedish labour market interventions. This is perhaps surprising given the expense of such services. So whether these policies offer real value for money or are as efficient as they might be is not known. The comprehensive level of assistance available certainly coincides with a very low level of unemployment

but it is not possible to say with any certainty that the jobsearch measures cause this. It is just as likely to be the case that the low level of unemployment allows the service to be run at this level. With a higher rate of unemployment it would perhaps prove too expensive to sustain.

Nevertheless, as a model of what can be done to help the jobless given the right level of resources, Sweden does stand out as an example of 'best practice'.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Policy Implications

In this section of the Commentary, the focus changes from a review and assessment of information which is largely empirical and uncontentious, to an attempt to address such information towards the design of effective policy instruments. In making this transition, we note that the status and intent of this section is somewhat different from what has gone earlier. Here our aim is to reveal avenues for policy formulation which appear to us to be worthwhile and potentially useful in improving jobsearch procedures among the unemployed. This involves making choices, making judgements and making recommendations. In so doing, we recognise that others may make different ones, and probably will. In consequence, what follows has no greater pretention than representing our opinions and conclusions, and no more advanced aim than contributing to an existing debate on the proper ends of public policy in the labour market.

7. Towards a Positive Model of Jobsearch

7.1 Is improving peoples' jobseeking skills worthwhile?

It is possible to argue that in an economy marked by a surplus of labour supply over demand, and by a distinct lack of labour shortage bottle-necks, that investing in improving the jobseeking skills of the unemployed is unlikely to improve the efficiency of the labour market, or to reduce the level of unemployment. The proponents of such a view would argue that, in implementing such an initiative, the gross effects would be small (as the unemployed represent only a small proportion of jobseekers); that deadweight would necessarily be high (as most new claimants find work relatively quickly under their own steam anyway); and that substitution would account for much of the rest of any observed net effect (as the success of previously unemployed jobseekers would simply displace other jobseekers into unemployment).

Such arguments of course overlook the corrosive and self-perpetuating effects of long term unemployment, both on the individual's self-esteem and motivation, and on the potential employer's assessment of his/her suitability for employment. Even if substitution is high, the prevention of individuals slipping into long term unemployment, from which it can be hard and expensive to extract them, is a legitimate aim of public policy. Indeed, if the argument is reversed, it is immediately clear that relatively poor jobsearch skills contribute to an under-utilisation of the workforce, both by contributing to a slide into long term unemployment, and by leading people into making sub-optimal job choices through an unnecessarily constrained choice of vacancies.

To the extent that the amelioration of the effects of unemployment on individuals and their families is a legitimate goal of public policy, and to the extent that a more active and deliberate approach to job creation is currently not, then improving jobsearch skills may be one of the few means through which individuals in unemployment can be positively helped. A parallel argument can also be applied to the circumstances and attributes of such individuals; unemployment is strongly associated with individual characteristics which are either fixed (age, previous job record, *etc.*), or difficult to change in the short run (qualifications, skill, location, *etc*). Jobsearch skills and techniques may, therefore, not be ultimately the most powerful axis around which to promote assistance, but it is nevertheless one which is immediately accessible, and potentially cost-effective to address.

It should also be said that our expert interviewees were unanimous in supporting the legitimacy and usefulness of such an orientation,

and not merely on the pragmatic grounds of accessibility suggested above. As one Employment Service respondent put it:

> 'In today's labour market, having very good jobsearching skills is not just an optional extra . . . it is a vital and necessary part of getting a job. . . . Competition is so severe, and employers so spoilt for choice, that the claimant will disqualify himself unless these skills are really keen. . . . it's all a question of edge . . . you've got to have an edge, and because our people have a lot of disadvantages, they need all the edge they can get . . . and having really sharp jobseeking skills can give them it'.

Compelling though such arguments are at the level of the individual jobseeker, it remains important that the argument made above about the modesty of the net gains of improved jobsearch skills is nevertheless kept in mind. If it does not provide a sufficient basis for ignoring investment in improved jobsearch skills, it strongly suggests that in order to be cost-effective, such investments need to be relatively low cost ones. There are clear implications here for the design of any such initiative, particularly regarding targeting and delivery.

7.2 Are claimants' jobsearch skills deficient?

Both targeting and modes of delivery, of assistance with jobsearch skills, could be facilitated if there was either a particular kind of claimant who tended to have poor jobsearch skills or if all claimants tended to place insufficient emphasis on particular aspects of jobsearch. It is unfortunately the case that our review of the literature and our 'expert' discussions do not provide such an easy resolution. Almost all the sources, both live and archival, suggest that the diversity and complexity of the unemployed flow, allied to the variety and fluidity of labour market conditions (local, occupational and cyclical), and the multiplicity of employer preferences and *modus operandi*, together preclude any basis for targeting which is both simple and reliable.

That said, three general themes emerged from our discussions and reviews of the literature, which may be helpful. The first concerns 'high risk' groups, whose characteristics might suggest a lack of familiarity with the labour market ropes, and jobsearch conventions. The following four groups were frequently cited, as likely to benefit from advice and guidance with jobsearch.

- **First time claimants** with a long, stable and continuous record of employment. Insulation from experience of, or thought about, the external labour market and the means of finding another job, is likely to be evident among workers who have enjoyed long and unbroken service with a single employer.
- **Occupation changers.** If the changing pattern of demand for labour leads jobseekers to move towards occupations of which they have little experience, they may not be aware of the recruitment and selection conventions surrounding the new

occupational labour market. To a lesser extent, the same comment was made about jobseekers relocating to a new area, or shifting between sectors (public to private, for example).

- **Unexpectedly redundant jobseekers.** In addition to the need to adjust to an unanticipated job change, such workers may also suffer from shock and the impact of redundancy itself. They may therefore be less adept at coming to grips with jobsearch.
- **Older workers.** As most job moves occur relatively early in life, older workers may have less, and crucially less recent, experience of the labour market. Further, unlike young workers, who can draw on the advice of the Careers Service, they enjoy no such specialist service.

The essential common ingredient here is jobseekers finding themselves in novel, unanticipated and potentially disorientating circumstances, through no choice of their own. No claims are made about the exclusivity of such jobseekers; it is simply more likely that such people will have a greater need of advice and guidance with jobsearch.

The second theme is less concerned with people having difficulty coming to terms with an unfamiliar situation, than with those who prematurely come to terms with it. Our 'expert' discussions suggest that a common shortcoming among unemployed jobseekers is that the undue narrowness which limits the channels which they use to identify vacancies. We have already mentioned the relatively low weight which unemployed jobseekers appear to lend to informal methods of jobsearch (particularly in occupations where formal methods coexist with informal ones). In addition, there may also be a propensity to discount informal methods as the duration of unemployment rises.

It is suggested that, if word of mouth and networking are not productive of any useful leads, that jobseekers tend to abandon them prematurely, on the grounds that you cannot find a job this way, falling back on newspapers and the jobcentre where self-evidently it is possible to find vacancies (even if few and much sought-after). Certainly, newspapers and jobcentre visits are often less time, energy and thought consuming than networking. Certainly, we know of the difficulties which unemployed people face in maintaining informal networks, particularly with the employed. It might be thought surprising if they persisted with a difficult and possibly awkward approach to jobseeking if their personal experience showed them that it produced no leads.

Furthermore, if (as will be argued below) it is important for jobseekers to maintain their jobsearch across a broad front of different methods, then public policy should be supportive of this end. However, under a regime of 'active signing' and 'actively seeking work', it is likely that jobseekers will bend towards methods which are more likely to produce evidence of such active jobsearch. This is most likely to mean greater attention to overt and formal methods, rather than the more subtle and informal approaches through personal contacts and networking.

Emphasis has to be placed on the need to engage in wider jobsearch, including informal methods. Flexibilities need to be built in to the 'active signing' system, which allow the jobseeker to place as much attention and energy on informal methods as (s)he does on formal methods.

The jobseeker needs to be committed to his/her jobsearch and engage in it primarily with the goal of finding a job, rather than with the primary aim of showing proof that s(he) is 'actively seeking work'.

The third theme concerns shortcomings in the nuts and bolts of jobsearch. Even if individuals establish and maintain a broad and appropriate portfolio across the various recruitment channels, and even if they pursue them all diligently, it may be that their efforts are undermined by purely technical considerations. Such problems might derive from poor literacy skills (resulting in poorly completed letters and application forms), poor communication skills (giving rise to a poor telephone manner for example), poor interpersonal skills (reducing the effectiveness of informal networking), *etc.* Such problems may be associated with poor basic skills, but may equally derive from a simple failure to realise the crucial importance of (say) producing a neat, accurate and legible application form, or having an easily accessible CV.

Thus, in conclusion we can say that assistance with jobsearch might usefully focus (1) on particular groups of claimants (who are likely to be at sea in an unfamiliar labour market), (2) on preventing the contraction of jobsearch avenues in the face of perceived unproductiveness, and (3) identifying any technical shortcomings which may undermine otherwise well-directed jobsearch efforts.

7.3 Are there generic characteristics of successful jobsearch?

Although the diversity of approaches to jobsearch has been stressed in what has gone before, it is clear that there are some generic characteristics which are likely to be associated with a successful outcome, for any given set of labour market circumstances. It is relatively easy to extract and list them, and this is done below. What is more difficult is to maintain a balance between the prescription of specific actions, which is so detailed as to be inappropriate to most of the cases in question (which as we have seen are marked by variety) and pitching the description at such a high level of abstraction, that it cannot easily be operationalised in a specific case.

The listing which follows is designed to steer a middle course between these two dangers. It is not in itself immediately translatable into specific actions, but it is readily capable of such translation.

We have identified eight characteristics of jobsearch which appear to be associated with success, and which it should be the aim of public policy to promote and/or facilitate.

1. Self-motivated

Under difficult labour market circumstances, successful jobsearch is likely to be both prolonged and difficult. For this reason, it is important that individual commitment to jobsearch is established at the outset and maintained throughout any period of unemployment. In addition, personal commitment is the best (some argue the only) means of ensuring high quality standards in the implementation of jobsearch procedures. Many of our respondents suggested that there are vital but difficult-to-identify differences between the substance of outwardly similar jobsearch activities, between internally-motivated and externally-motivated jobseekers. If public policy is to promote successful jobsearch, then it should aim to foster the first (through winning the commitment and active participation of the jobseeker), rather than simply enforce a superficial show of activity, devoid of content.

In practice, this means securing (1) the jobseeker's active engagement in design of a personal jobsearch, (2) his/her commitment to implement the plan as a whole, and (3) his/her commitment to review and adapt the plan in the light of experience and changing circumstances. In essence, this is precisely what the 'Back to Work Plans' are intended to secure. Although little formal evaluation of BWPs has been carried out, early experience suggests that they do not wholly achieve this; for example, a review carried out in Mid South Wales, admittedly based on only 33 individuals, found that one in five denied (or were uncertain) that they had a BWP, and only two thirds believed that the BWP's purpose was to provide advice about finding work. A Customer Satisfaction Survey carried out in 1992 found that only ten per cent of the respondents considered BWP to be useful, while thirty eight per cent felt it was not very useful. Claimants who did not think that BWPs were useful said they already knew the procedures, felt that it was unable to cope with their specialist requirements and that the advice given on jobsearch was limited. The survey found that the plan was of most use to those who had previously been in the clerical/secretarial occupations and was least useful to those who had been in the associate professional and technical professions.

It is not our purpose to knock BWPs. Their development and modification will undoubtedly increase both their visibility and their perceived utility to claimant jobseekers. Indeed, we hope that our work will contribute to this end. However, it should be said that in their current guise, BWPs appear to be only a modest step towards winning the active participation of the jobseeker.

The Employment Service has undertaken a number of small scale reviews of their clients' experiences of, and attitudes towards, BWPs. None of these is sufficient alone to provide conclusive evidence, but they all tend to point in the same direction. The BWPs had not greatly influenced clients' approaches to jobseeking and, although most clients had correctly perceived that BWPs were supposed to help them find work, rather few had, in practice, found them useful. In the main, this appears to be because BWPs did little more than reiterate what clients said they would do anyway. Winning jobseeker

commitment to active jobsearch seems most likely to turn on their judgement that it will be worthwhile.

Indeed, most of our 'experts' doubted whether such active commitment could be built by any means other than the individual's judgement that the jobsearch procedures would increase the likelihood of finding an appropriate job. In this context, the notion of the 'benefit contract' is relevant, for it serves to propose an alternative rationale, which is that engagement in jobsearch is the *quid pro quo* for benefit eligibility. One of our Jobcentre focus groups concluded that the 'claim/claimant' terminology asserted too strongly the unqualified right to unemployment benefit, and suggested that an 'apply/applicant' terminology would be more appropriate to a more conditional benefit regime. Certainly, few respondents had any doubt that most unemployed claimants believe that benefit is a right, procured by their (or their families) previous NI and tax contributions. Even if it was the case that making this right more conditional would produce more jobsearch activity, it is far from clear that it would improve the quality of that activity through promoting personal commitment to, and identification with, a jobsearch plan.

2. Focused (and realistic)

As has already been discussed in the previous section, jobseekers with a more crystallised idea of the sort of job they are looking for tend to be more successful in finding a job, than do those who have no such focus. Undoubtedly, there are some complex interactions underlying this association, which detract from its causal appeal. Nevertheless, it is immediately plausible that greater clarity about what sort of job is sought should lead to greater clarity about where and how to look for it, as well as providing the basis for a more convincing answer to the employer's stock question 'Tell me, what is it about this job that appeals to you?'

However, it is also immediately obvious that encouraging such a focus is only likely to be positively helpful, if it is attended by a realistic appraisal of the jobseekers' circumstances (experience, qualifications, wage expectations, mobility, *etc.)* and the availability of such openings to him/her (local labour market considerations, employer preferences, *etc.*).

In our view, a sound approach to jobsearch should be predicated on three, inter-related foci; (1) the job(s) in question, (2) employers who are likely to have vacancies for such jobs, and (3) the spatial dimensions of the labour market within which such employers might be sought.

3. Breadth across vacancy channels

The propensity for employers to use various combinations of recruitment channels has already been referred to. So too has the tendency of jobseekers to narrow their search to relatively few of these. Thus, under most conditions, it would be appropriate for jobseekers simultaneously to pursue three channels of jobsearch, concentrating respectively on (1) formally advertised vacancies, (2)

personal contacts among friends, family *etc.*, as a means of securing early advice of forthcoming vacancies, and providing a personal recommendation to the recruiter, and (3) speculative approaches to appropriate employers, with the aim of coinciding with a new vacancy or getting onto a waiting list for forthcoming ones.

Establishing and maintaining three such strands within the jobsearch model should maximise the receptivity of the jobseeker to vacancy information, and minimise the likelihood that they might miss out on a whole tranche of the labour market, simply through listening in the wrong places. But in addition, there may be considerable cross-fertilisation between the three strands, each acting to reinforce the others, as well as possessing its own legitimacy; for example, diligent tracking of formal advertising can produce a hit list of employers who are known to employ people in the desired job, because they have previously advertised for them, and so who should be targeted for speculative application, or whose workforce should be reviewed to elicit any contacts which might be exploitable.

4. Appropriate balance in the use of vacancy channels

The strong and persistent occupational clustering in the use of different recruitment channels has already been discussed, as has the likely influence of employer-specific factors on such preferences. Taking a reading of the comparative importance of the various recruitment channels according to occupation can give jobseekers some insight into how they ought to divide their efforts between the three strands proposed above. In extreme cases, this might lead them to concentrate largely on a single channel; for example, labourers and craftsmen in construction are rarely recruited through formal advertising, except in cases of very large projects undertaken by major contractors. So, in searching for such a job, a jobseeker would be well advised to place most of their effort on personal contacts and personal speculative applications at site, while simply keeping a watching brief on the more formal channels. For other jobs, other methods of jobsearch may be more or less effective. While many jobs may be advertised through proven channels such as the Jobcentre and the media, jobseekers would be well advised to research the norms in recruitment for their work area.

Regular employer-based surveys about recruitment channels could provide a reliable means of providing this information to jobseekers. In the short term, existing data from the 1992 SCPR survey could be analysed to provide at least an outline of the variety across broad occupational groups and between different employer types. Consideration should also be given to the experiences of other jobseekers and attention paid to the channels that they have found to be most effective.

5. Professional implementation

In any circumstances, but most especially at times of high unemployment, recruiters tend to adopt fairly brutal measures to reduce the volume of applicants to practical proportions. Applicants who do not realise the importance of complying with employer

expectations in such circumstances will unnecessarily (and perhaps fatally) disadvantage themselves. Thus, the quality of any written material (such as letters of inquiry, covering letters, application forms, CVs *etc.*) should be sufficiently high to meet employer expectations (which themselves tend to rise in a buyer's market). Furthermore, we know that employers also use such material to assess literacy among applicants (Atkinson and Papworth, 1991), and so even if it is legible enough to avoid the wastepaper bin, it may still do the applicant a disservice.

Similar considerations apply to telephone manner, interview technique, dress codes, *etc.* The essential point is that the jobseeker should review their written and other communications with potential employers with a critical eye, and not let themselves down unknowingly.

6. Persistence and continuity

Maintaining the momentum of active jobsearch is clearly an increasingly important element in the face of both a relatively stagnant job market, and the failure of early efforts to deliver a job, or leads towards one. We have argued in the previous section that with an increasing duration of unemployment, some of the practical necessities of jobsearch (social networks with employed people, car, clothes, *etc.*) become attenuated. So too do the motivational necessities, as individuals may conclude from a persistent experience of failure (to locate vacancies, to get shortlisted, *etc.*) that their efforts are simply not worthwhile, and cannot make much difference in the face of a hostile labour market and strong competition from other jobseekers. Resignation to continuing unemployment, a reduced tempo of jobsearch, and a contraction in the breadth of jobsearch will undoubtedly become self-fulfilling prophecies, and thus successful patterns of jobsearch are those which are maintained until they are successful.

Our research suggests that in addition to this general need for continuity of effort and commitment, there are three specific areas to which particular attention should be given, as follows.

- **Staying broad:** we have already suggested that informal methods of jobsearch may be the first to be abandoned, particularly in the face of early failure, and a benefit regime which encourages formal and overt methods. Jobseekers should be encouraged to maintain all three avenues (formal, informal/personal and speculative), even in the face of poor results.
- **Repeat calls:** as vacancies are normally declared in a flow (albeit an intermittent one), rather than *en bloc*, jobseekers should not write off possible openings (personal contacts, speculatively approached firms, past employers, *etc.*) simply because a single approach did not produce a job lead. Conversely, nor should they assume that a single approach remains sufficient to lodge the individual in the memory, so precluding the need for repeat or reminder calls. Jobseekers should therefore be encouraged, neither to write off specific leads, nor to assume they are in the bag, on the basis of a single instance. Rather they should be encouraged

to review and revisit such instances, both to maintain their visibility, and to update themselves on circumstances. Naturally, it must remain a matter of judgement when such repeat calls serve to disadvantage the jobseeker; both frequency and manner of approach will undoubtedly have a bearing on this.

- **Active file:** we are aware of relatively little research done on employers' use of waiting lists. Anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that practice varies widely both in terms of the status of the waiting list (from an active queue to 'file and forget') and the responsibility for actioning the list when a vacancy is declared (will the employer take the initiative and place the individual on the list of applicants, or must the jobseeker re-apply, drawing attention to his/her membership of the list?). Jobseekers should be encouraged to maintain an active file on job leads. This will serve not only to come to decisions about repeat calling, but also where the onus lies, and what they should do about, waiting lists.

7. Formally recorded log

The multi-facetted and possibly extended approach to jobsearch described above is unlikely to be a simple affair, and may be of considerable complexity. As a means of keeping tabs on both concurrent decisions, and longer term emphasis, jobseekers should be encouraged to maintain a log of their actions. It is important to stress that creating and maintaining such a formal log should serve the intrinsic requirements of effective jobsearch. It can act as both short term reminder, and long term mentor. That it can also serve as a basis for evaluating the intensity or seriousness of jobsearch with a view to benefit eligibility will undoubtedly be as clear to the jobseeker as it is to the Employment Service. For this reason, the intrinsic merits of such a log should be stressed.

8. Periodic review

Finally, the entire process, and the procedures invoked by it, should be the subject of periodic review by the jobseeker. While it may be that the inputs of a professional adviser at the jobcentre can bring experience and objectivity to such a review, and indeed might provide the occasion or stimulus for it to happen, it is important (if self-motivation in jobsearch is to be maintained) that the individual remains in control of the review process and committed to the outcomes.

It is evident that there is a circularity in the focus of such reviews, with an initial review of job aims, giving rise to more focused reviews of both the technical and procedural aspects of jobsearch, eventually returning to the realism of the initial job goals, and the opening of other possibilities, as follows:

Initial review of job aims
Crystallisation of job goals

Professional implementation
Nuts and bolts

Methods/techniques adopted
Appropriate balance in jobsearch channels

Realism of job aims
Other avenues
- training
- education

This concludes the discussion of the generic characteristics which the Employment Service should be trying to instill into the jobsearch practices of their clients. We now go on to suggest a simple flow model of jobsearch, identifying in it those points at which the Employment Service might usefully intervene to promote such good practice.

7.4 A simple model of jobsearch

Figure 3 suggests a simple flow chart outlining the various components of jobsearch practice, and how they fit together, both procedurally and over time. In our view it is precisely these components, their inter-relationships, and their implementation over time, which should form the substance of improved Back to Work Plans, a well as providing a basis for the proposed reviews of practice and goals.

The model also suggests the most important nodes for Employment Service intervention, essentially falling into four phases, as follows.

1. Initial advice and guidance phase: this phase should be regarded as essentially preparatory. We have observed the critical influences of focus, realism, breadth and professional implementation on effective jobsearch. During this phase, jobseekers need to assess their circumstances and aspirations, and to devise a realistic jobsearch plan to help them achieve these aspirations. Here the role of the Employment Service is to help clients draw up realistic BWPs, which are both appropriate to the individual's circumstances and aspirations, and based on appropriate jobsearch methods for the job goals suggested. We should note that the duration of this phase may be very short for a well-motivated and well-informed jobseeker. Furthermore, for such an individual, in particular, it should overlap with the second phase of implementation. No useful end will be served if completion of BWPs actually holds back a resourceful and motivated (or just lucky) individual from looking for work from day one of his/her unemployment.

2. Initial implementation of jobsearch activity: in this phase, individuals should be armed with a sound assessment of the sort of job they are looking for, a good idea of how to go about getting it and an appropriate portfolio of 'tools' (such as CVs, letters of application, references, *etc.*). The phase consists of their efforts to find vacancies, apply for them, perform well during selection and, hopefully, get taken on. Here the role of the Employment Service is to provide detail

ES Assistance in Jobsearch Activity
Initial Job Choice
Initial Back to Work Plan
Formal Avenues
Personal Contacts
Speculative Approach to Employers
Jobcentre/ES Careers Serv
Local Press
National Press
Trade Journal
Free Sheets
Commercial Agencies
Other Agencies
Identify Key Contacts
Any Contacts ?
Direct Approach
Forthcoming Vacancies
Waiting List
Nuts and Bolts
Application Form, CV, References
Current Applications
Shortlisting
Interview Prep
Interview Outcome
Active File
and
Jobsearch Log
Review Initial Job Choice
Review J'search Procedures
Initial Advice and Guidance Phase
Ensure that initial job choice is informed by realism, taking account of personal attributes, qualifications, skills, experience and ELM conditions.
Initial assessment on basis of initial Back to Work Plan.
Ensure that all three avenues are understood and activated.
Advise on appropriate balance between the three.
Initial review of 'Nuts and Bolts', in context of planned BWP.
Initial Implementation Phase
Advise on FORMAL avenues, appropriate to occupational choice and ELM conditions
Review list of PERSONAL CONTACTS (family, friends, contacts in employment).
Advise on appropriate employers (or sources of lists) for SPECULATIVE APPROACH.
Advise on need to track and record all leads through ACTIVE FILE.
Maintenance and Fine-tuning Phase
Advise on need to review and re-activate waiting lists periodically.
Ensure 'Nuts and Bolts' are ready and appropriate for active leads.
Assist with application forms, etc if needed.
Advise on need for continuity and persistence.
Initial review of active file
Review Phase
Formal review of BWP and jobsearch procedures
Formal review of job choice

Figure 3 A model of jobsearch activity

Source: IMS

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on implementation, as well as job leads, *etc*. But the main thrust here properly belongs with the jobseeker.

3. Maintenance and fine tuning stage: here the Employment Service will provide appropriate assistance with implementation, particularly with the identification (and if possible amelioration) of practical constraints, record keeping, and reviews of client progress. The need for more profound remedial assistance may be indicated at this stage.

4. Review stage: here the Employment Service should engage in a formal joint review of both procedures and job choices. Outcomes may simply be to stress the need for continuity and persistence, or could lead to more substantial changes in the BWP, in terms of job choice or jobsearch procedures, or both.

It is recognised that most aspects of these four phases are already in existence and operating. Our aim here is not to reinvent the wheel, but rather to increase its traction, by reviewing the design as a whole. In so doing four key issues present themselves as the principal ones which must be addressed, and over which there is little consensus, within and beyond the Employment Service. These are outlined and discussed below.

7.5 Key issues affecting the Employment Service role in enhancing jobsearch

We have identified four important and inter-related issues, whose resolution is critical in setting the terrain on which the Employment Service can develop and apply its role in enhancing clients' jobsearch practices. They are:

Timing: at what stage in the trajectory of an individual's unemployment should the various phases outlines above be triggered? and,

Selection: what should trigger them? to what extent is it possible or desirable to select individuals who are particularly 'at risk' (of failing in jobsearch and perhaps long-term unemployment as a result) prospectively, rather than retrospectively, and direct to them a different portfolio of assistance?

Resource: how far does the Employment Service have the calibre of staffing to cope simultaneously with high numbers of claimants and the need to provide better guidance with jobsearch techniques to them?

Interaction with Benefit Administration: how can a tighter administration of benefits and improvements in jobsearch procedures be made complementary and mutually reinforcing, rather than antagonistic and mutually undermining?

We discuss them in turn.

The timing of jobsearch intervention

The central working assumption underpinning most interventions in the unemployment flow in the UK has been to go with the flow; to allow the natural workings of the labour market at least to remove the frictional element in unemployment from the register, and often to delay intervention further until it is concerned only with a residue of long term unemployed. The logic and logistics supporting such a stance are both compelling, and the Restart/Jobclub initiatives which are founded on them have undoubtedly been successful.

Two counter-arguments need to be addressed however. The first maintains that such logic applies only so long as the unemployment flow continues to flow strongly; in the face of a stagnant labour market, where outflows into employment are relatively low, there may be a case for earlier intervention. We know surprisingly little about the characteristics and behaviour of the short-term unemployed, perhaps because research interests have mirrored policy concern with people who stay on, rather than those who flow off, the register. While we do know that they appear to have more developed jobseeking skills than the stayers, they also tend to have greater intrinsic and human capital attractiveness to employers. We do not know the relative importance of these factors, and we do not know how far a modest improvement in the former could offset deficiencies in the latter, at an early stage in the duration of unemployment.

The second counter-argument suggests that it is illogical to allow people to dig themselves into a pit, perhaps exhausting themselves in so doing, before addressing their problems. There is an extensive literature cataloguing the widespread deterioration in motivation, self-confidence, application, and more tangible physical assets as unemployment lengthens, and a parallel demand-side literature charting the rise of employer squeamishness about recruiting from the ranks of the long term unemployed.

The adoption of formal Back to Work Plans at the earliest opportunity marks a break with the conventional logic. But, as noted above, there seem to be some implementation problems derived precisely from the earliness of their introduction. To cite one of our respondents directly:

> 'We are trying to squeeze too much into too short a time...the initial interview is only 40 minutes...and very often most of that is taken up with benefit eligibility...more importantly, for many claimants that is the only thing they are interested in at that time...it's the main thing on their minds, just as it would be on yours, to get the family income sorted out now that the pay packets have dried up.... I'm not saying that they're not interested in getting a job; they are. But at that moment it is number two on their priorities...just because they don't take it seriously then, doesn't mean that they won't take it seriously at all.... I think that we hit them too soon, with too much, at a time when many of them are in a state of shock, and they only hear what they want to hear.'

Clearly a formal evaluation of BWPs will be needed to ascertain how valid such a view is. We note only that in our (very limited) ambit, we heard similar views surprisingly often. Furthermore, it is not *a priori* unlikely when the time and content of such an interview are

considered. According to the guidance for Back to Work Teams, this 40 minute initial interview should involve:

- taking the claim accurately and promptly
- explaining benefit entitlement regulations, in particular, outlining the 'Availability' and 'Actively Seeking Work' conditions
- filtering out clients for whom unemployment benefit is not the most appropriate choice
- providing an EO diagnostic interview where appropriate
- giving in-work benefit advice
- advising on the length of the 'Permitted Period'
- completing a BWP

If we assume for the moment that there is some validity to this argument about stronger initial priorities, and taking account of what we have said earlier about the (1) need for self-motivation and individual commitment to the perceived appropriateness and helpfulness of their own BWP; and (2) about the need to contain costs in the face of high volumes, then a more appropriate phasing might look as follows:

Day 1	Initial Claim	Establish benefit eligibility, and relation questions.
		Ensure client understands his/her obligations, the first of which should be to prepare a BWP.
		Initial discussion of job aims.
		Provide guidance/prompt material on jobsearch to help in preparation of BWP
		Pro forma BWP.
Day 5	BWP Interview	Client produces completed BWP (condition of benefit ?).
		BWP reviewed with the Employment Service, providing further advice and guidance, as necessary.

Under such an arrangement, the individual's considered BWP provides a basis for assessment of next step. This could be one of four outcomes, depending on the practicality of the steps laid out in the BWP, as follows:

1.	BWP is appropriate	Client implements BWP to 13 week review.
2.	BWP incomplete or partial	The Employment Service advisor assists in completion; gives guidance on implementation. Client implements revised BWP to 13 week review.

3.	BWP seriously inadequate	Counselling and direction to appropriate remedial advice/ guidance on jobsearch. Client implements revised BWP. Possible active signing review.
4.	Job aims unattainable	Review job aims with the Employment Service. Re-direction from Jobsearch towards other programmes.

The advantages of this arrangement would be that the link between benefits and engaging in jobsearch is established early and clearly, while at the same time the client is given sufficient time, resources and advice to help them devise their own considered plan for finding a job. The adequacy of such a plan would then form the basis for an assessment of the amount of Employment Service attention this individual subsequently warranted, as well as an indication of the likely areas where remedial help or advice might be useful.

Selecting clients for appropriate employment service intervention

Our discussions have suggested that selecting individuals for assistance with jobsearch techniques by reference to their duration of unemployment could usefully be supplemented by three further criteria, as follows:

High risk groups

We have already suggested that certain 'high risk' groups, whose characteristics might suggest a lack of familiarity with the labour market ropes, and jobsearch conventions, could usefully be targeted for early and more comprehensive assistance with jobsearch. The following four groups were frequently cited, as likely to benefit from advice and guidance with jobsearch, namely first time claimants with a long, stable and continuous record of employment, occupation or labour market changers, unexpectedly redundant jobseekers, and older workers. No doubt there are other such high risk groups.

Inadequate or incompetent BWPs

A second alternative would be to use the appropriateness of the individual's BWP as a basis for deciding on appropriate action. It is likely that many individuals, particularly with the benefit of good written guidance and pro-forma material would produce perfectly competent BWPs. But for those who did not (perhaps because of inadequate focusing on the job sought, or not knowing which jobsearch channels to use, or because of shortcomings in their portfolio of 'nuts and bolts') then the Employment Service could take further action. This could vary from a revision to a BWP based on a discussion with the client, through for example, a nomination to attend a workshop on preparing a CV, to a Jobclub referral.

Self-nomination

To the extent that individual jobseekers themselves felt a need for more/better advice or guidance on some particular aspect of jobsearch, then they should be able to nominate themselves for it. It seems reasonable to conclude that few clients would propose themselves to an activity which they would not find useful in finding work, or which they did not think they needed. Self nomination could therefore provide a further basis for selection cases of particular need, and identifying that need.

7.6 Employment Service resources and jobcentre staff

One of the recurrent themes of our research has been the stress placed on the capacity of the Employment Service to deliver high quality advice and guidance to jobseekers because of the large number of clients passing through the register currently. The disparity between staff/client ratios in the UK and, for example, Germany has already been referred to, and clearly, the current recession has done nothing to relieve this situation.

It seems likely that the reorganisation of jobcentre staff into 'Back to Work Teams' will provide a basis on which the EO/AO staff mix can be adjusted according to the more diversified nature of the client's needs, likely to be revealed by the approach outlined above. By more systematically identifying clients with greater needs for help, the Employment Service will be in a position to allocate more experienced and specialist staff to them within the BWT. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that any organisational change can have a sufficiently powerful impact as to offset the pernicious effects of such high client workloads.

In view of what we concluded earlier, about the need to find relatively low cost means of assisting the very large volumes of short duration clients, then an important avenue for the Employment Service to explore will be the production of written advice and guidance about devising and implementing a planned and coherent approach to jobsearch. The current BWP pro forma is evidently designed in some measure to prompt decisions, but mainly to be a record of decisions taken. It contains no advice or guidance (even if only in the form of multiple choice selections) on completion. Such help presently comes from Employment Service staff which increases the amount of time that they have to spend with each individual client and adds to an already heavy workload. In our view, more appropriate BWP would lay greater stress on outlining the several different avenues of jobsearch that are available. A properly completed BWP cannot help but form a record of intended actions; it does not need to limit it itself to this, and a more extensive form can be envisaged which would simultaneously:

1. prompt clients on relevant criteria to inform their initial job choice, *eg* past experience, work-based competencies, qualifications, salary expectations, hours of work, *etc.*

2. provide guidance with variation in the use of recruitment channels by occupation and employer type;

3. encourage the simultaneous use of informal channels, and prompt jobseekers to identify appropriate target contacts or target employers;

4. identify and have clients assess their need for, and provision with, jobseeking 'nuts and bolts' (CVs, application letters, references, *etc.*); remind clients about the importance attached to accurate completion of application forms, *etc.* and identify any needs for help here.

Practical problems will have to be overcome when designing BTWPs, to ensure that they are suitable for the range of clients who will use them. BTWPs will also need to be suitable for clients with learning difficulties and clients for whom English is their second language.

While the discussion on targeting above suggests that better indicators can be found to assist the Employment Service in delivering more appropriate assistance to those in most need, it should be recognised that the current emphasis on meeting volume targets for placement could have precisely the opposite effect, moving the emphasis towards those cases deemed relatively easy to place, and away from those with more time-consuming needs. Our focus group discussions placed considerable emphasis on the 'realpolitik' involved in making choices between clients, when the resulting placement outcomes would be used to contribute to the assessment of the individual advisor. The Employment Service will need to ensure that initiatives in one area are not undercut, or simply displaced, by those in another.

Finally, while there is undoubtedly much benefit to be gained through the interaction of more coherent and helpful written material to assist client self-help, and more effective targeting on individual cases with particular needs, there remains a further problem created by high volumes. This is the natural withdrawal from spending time and resources on labour market information and research, to spend it on directly client-related interviewing. Although it was not one of the aims of our research, it is immediately obvious that the quality of advice and guidance available to jobseekers through the Employment Service is influenced by the quality and currency of the Employment Service labour market information, both general (*ie* recent and upcoming development in the local labour markets), as well as employer-specific (who is hiring, who is not, what diverse recruitment and selection norms are used by particular employers, *etc.*).

We have formed three impressions of the nature of the labour market information-gathering and sifting procedures at work in Jobcentres (albeit admittedly on the basis of anecdote only). The first is that the basic system relies on diffusion for qualitative information to percolate between Employment Service Jobcentre staff, and such a system is acutely sensitive to staff turnover and staff having other more pressing responsibilities. The second impression is that the

pressures to process high levels of clients have squeezed the amount of time and effort which Jobcentres devote to such external information gathering. The third impression is that although every TEC in the country has been spending considerable amount of public money in gathering local labour market information, little or none of this seems to have fed through into the Employment Service in general, and the local Jobcentres in particular.

Improving the quality and timeliness of LLMI available to Jobcentre staff may not pay back immediate and observable benefits, but in the longer term, it must surely improve the usefulness of the guidance which the Employment Service can offer to jobseekers and employers alike. The BWT regime might provide the basis for the allocation of more precise allocation of LLMI-gathering responsibilities, as well as providing a better means of disseminating information within the local office.

7.7 Jobsearch and the benefit entitlement

Our review of jobsearch procedures and the context in which they take place has shown that there are both generic characteristics of good jobsearch practice, and that there are general patterns of labour market behaviour which can be understood and used to inform the implementation of that practice. However, we have also stressed that the individual's understanding of, faith in, and commitment to his/her own jobsearch plan is perhaps the most important aspect of all in achieving a positive outcome. In part this is because of the importance of their motivation in driving the plan forward in the face of an adverse labour market. It is also because the design and implementation of the jobseeking plan must recognise and be capable of dealing with the complexity and diversity of his/her individual circumstances, as well as the specific configuration of labour market elements surrounding this particular employer and that particular vacancy.

The argument which we have developed therefore suggests that the most general 'off the peg' jobsearch guidelines can do is to establish a helpful and supportive framework on which the jobseeker must build their own 'bespoke' plan. This is not simply a reflection of our due modesty. It is also in recognition of the critical role of individual ownership and commitment must rightly play in getting back to work. In precisely the same vein, just as an over-prescriptive jobsearch plan could squeeze out that important personal element, so too could an unduly regimented benefit regime impose detailed jobsearch procedures lacking that element of individual ownership, which, we would argue, alone provides the authentication required to win real commitment to implementation.

In short, just as jobsearch guidelines should provide a framework, for individuals to build on, so too should a benefit regime aim to provide a context which is supportive of the general principles of effective jobsearch, while avoiding the dead hand of over-prescription. Thus, we have concluded that the most useful contributions to jobsearch

which the benefit regime can make are two; firstly to require individuals to compose a satisfactory BWP during their first few days as a claimant; and secondly, to comply with the components of that BWP (including a log and active file, as suggested above) as a condition of continuing eligibility.

The first proposal is designed to have two effects; firstly, by making a clear distinction between the initial 'benefit' interview, and a subsequent, 'jobsearch' one, clients should be better able to concentrate their attention on the substantive content of the interview. Secondly, by giving the client useful guidance material for completing his/her BWP, and some time in which to do it, a more genuinely useful and considered BWP should be produced, to which the client is committed. The second proposal ensures that the link between jobsearch and benefit is not lost however; the client's commitment to his/her BWP rests not just on ownership and appropriateness, but also on the understanding that its preparation and implementation is a condition of benefit.

It will be observed that these two proposals are mutually reinforcing. By taking more time and effort to construct an appropriate BWP, which is recognised as useful by the individual jobseeker, the perception of being dragooned into a meaningless charade of activity for its own sake ought to be reduced. By contrast, by establishing a broad basis for vacancy-searching and by requiring clients to maintain some form of log of their activities, a proper foundation for validating the extent of clients' active search for work is laid. This should avoid the danger of limiting jobsearch to too narrow a range of jobseeking activities, simply because they are readily productive of evidence. Further, it should both allow and encourage the 'informal' methods of jobsearch; the individual's BWP legitimises such approaches and his/her logs can record details of speculative approaches to both individuals and potential employers.

Clearly, the design, piloting and implementation of such an approach will stretch both the resources and the conventions of the Employment Service. So too will it call for more consistent and thoughtful approaches on the part of many jobseekers. Nevertheless, we conclude that unemployed jobseekers can be given better guidance and help in looking for work and that it will be the quality and perceived usefulness of such assistance which will provide the legitimacy for a more overt link between benefit and jobsearch activity.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Bibliography

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Appendix 2: List of Experts Involved in Consultation

Michael Banks	Social and Applied Psychology Unit, University of Sheffield
Colin Brighton	Employment Service
Lee Brown	Employment Service: Claimant Advice Branch
Keith Burn	Employment Service: Business Consultancy Services
Polly Carroll	Occupational Psychologist, Employment Department
Rob Cornwall	Employments Service
Len Dawes	Employment Service
Mike French	Employment Service: Benefit Management Branch
Rod Halstead	Employment Service: Head of Benefit Policy Branch
Jayne Humme	Employment Policy Institute
Barbara Reeves	Employment Service: Local Office Manageress
Steve Slater	Employment Service, Euston Road: Field Operations Manager
Michael White	Policy Studies Institute

Discussion groups:

Birkenhead Jobcentre
Grimsby Jobcentre

Appendix 3 : Discussion Guide

1. In determining a given individual's duration of unemployment, how important a factor is poor jobsearch skills?

   (particularly when compared with objective factors (age, gender, skill, health, employment record, etc.) and external labour market conditions).

   (nb throughout, jobsearch is taken to include both the process of individual job choice (ie occupational decidedness) and the process of finding and getting one)

2. Are there generic characteristics of successful jobsearch and if so, what are they?

   (or are there as many patterns of jobsearch as there are jobseekers?)

3. Are jobsearch skills deficient among LTU and if so, in what way?

   eg vocational awareness
   occupational decidedness
   intensity (too low/too high)
   inappropriate methods (for job in question)

4. Do unemployed people have particular disadvantages which inhibit their conduct of jobsearch?

   eg access to networks
   time
   money
   motivation

5. If the jobsearch skills of the unemployed are deficient, how can this best be ascertained in individual cases?

   eg record of jobsearch activities
   time spent
   money spent
   quality of jobsearch

6. How effective an assessment and guidance service do unemployed jobseekers currently receive at Jobcentres?

7. Is there a demand for more/better?

8. What are the constraints on them getting more/better assessment and guidance about jobsearch?

9. In particular, what type of skills do employment advisers need to meet the assessment and guidance needs of Jobcentre clients?

10. How well are the norms of such employer behaviour understood by Jobcentre staff, (employment advisers in particular)?

11. Independently of how well they are understood by Jobcentre staff, are there generic models of vacancy filling which describe employer recruitment and selection behaviour?

12. What are the principal determinants of such employer behaviour?

    eg *sector*
    establishment size
    occupation
    labour market conditions

13. Can the implementation of jobsearch activities be monitored/measured/assessed?

14. How effective a vehicle for improving jobsearch skills are Back to Work Teams likely to prove ?

Appendix 4: Research Specification

The proposed research is intended to develop jobsearch models that can be used by Employment Service staff to improve the advice and guidance offered by the Employment Service to jobseekers, and in particular to devise practical 'Back to Work Plans' for unemployed jobseekers.

The Employment Service wishes to provide jobseekers with advice about their jobsearch activities, which will take into account changing labour market conditions, and reflect sectoral and occupational diversity. Such advice must be appropriate to individual cases, and so will be genuinely helpful to individuals looking for jobs. One of the outputs of such advice will take the form of a Back to Work Plan (BWP hereafter) which will be jointly agreed by the individual and the Employment Service. The BWP may form part of an implicit contract between the Employment Service and the jobseeker. For its part, the Employment Service will spell out more clearly what help and assistance it can provide (benefit eligibility, training, jobsearch, etc), and simultaneously spell out to the individual what their side of the contract consists of.

For this reason, the BWP should also be verifiable, so that the Employment Service can assess how far the individual is actively implementing it, and evaluate the usefulness of the steps suggested.

It is understood that the research will be conducted in confidence.

Research Aims

The main aims of the research will be:

- to collate and review existing research and experience informing the notion of jobsearch. This should include both the jobseeker's and the employer's perspectives, and should reflect the diversity of the UK labour market;
- to develop a conceptual framework on which a common understanding of the jobsearch process can be built; on this basis, to develop an operational framework and guidelines, which together will provide the Employment Service with a practical basis for devising and implementing jobsearch guidance and monitoring procedures; and,to advise the Employment Service on appropriate means of field-testing and validating these.

Research Methods

The research will comprise four elements. The first will be to undertake a thorough review of existing published and unpublished literature, relevant to issues of jobsearch procedures. The review will be summarised in a annotated bibliography.

The second element will be a series of expert interviews within the Employment Service itself. With the Employment Service's help, IMS will identify and interview the appropriate respondents, who are expected to be a mix of policy branch staff and researchers. The interview process will however be extended to include Employment Service fieldworkers, such as Jobcentre and Jobclub staff.

The third element will comprise parallel interviews among academic and other non-Employment Service researchers who have undertaken relevant work.

Finally, IMS will advise on the translation of these various data into practical operational framework and guidelines for use by Employment Service staff providing jobsearch advice to claimants.

Research Outputs

There will be three principal outputs. the first will be the literature review mentioned above. The second will consist of a half day workshop for relevant Employment Service staff, to which IMS will present the findings and conclusions of the work. This presentation, with the benefit of the subsequent discussion, will form the basis for the third output, which will be a concise written report, summarising the results of the research, in a form appropriate to the Employment Service's further needs.

Timetable

15-23 Mar	Initial Discussions Literature Search initiated
25 Mar	Initial Spec to the Employment Service
5 April	Interviews begin
5 May	Interviews complete
17/21 May	Workshop presentation of results (Sheffield, Employment Service to fix date)
1 June	Draft Report

Project Management

The project will be led for IMS by John Atkinson, and for the Employment Service by Lesley Longstone. IMS staff contributing to the project will be John Atkinson, Margaret Dolan and Jim Hillage. IMS will liaise with the Employment Service at every stage of the research, and day to day liaison will be through Chris Anderson for the Employment Service, and John Atkinson for IMS.

Appendix 5: Commentary Programme List

1. Issues raised by the DE Group Problems and Pressures Affecting Firms

2. Shortages of Electrical Engineers Output — Employment/ Unemployment Relationships: A Company Level View

   The Employment of Accountants

   Women's Employment: A Bibliography

3. The Employment of Accountants — An Outline of the IMS/EEF Productivity Study Case Study of the Effects of Legislation in the Off-shore Oil Construction Sector

   Two IMS Manpower Survey Occupational Analyses Updated: Electrical Engineers*; Secretaries and Typists in Greater London

4. Changing Employment/Output Relationships (full version and an outline of findings)

5. Report of the IMS Survey of Emigration of Electrical Engineers (full version and summary version)

6. Changes in the Output/Employment Relationship since the middle of 1978

   Trends in Occupation 1974-78

   Absence*

   Employers' Attitudes to the Provision of Advance Part-time and Short Courses in Technology

7. Follow-up Survey on Firms' Output and Employment plans

   Potential for Worksharing in Selected UK Organisations*

   Future Manpower Requirments in the UK Carpet Industry*

The Determinants of Doctors' Career Decisions*

Graduates' Early Work Experience*

8. Mobility in the Labour Market

9. Case Studies in Labour Mobility
The Absence Workshop — A Summary*

10. Sick Pay and Absence

11. Alleviating Skill Shortages: The Contributions of Internal Company Manpower Utilisation and Publicly — funded Training

12. Redundancy Payments Survey: Findings on the Feasibility Study
Performance and Productivity in Engineering

The Absence Workshop: Results of the 1979 Absence Survey*

13. Redundancy Provisions (summary findings)

Redundancy Provisions (statistical tables)

14. Recruitment and Training in the Recession

15. Labour Productivity and the Current Recession

16. The Layard Scheme: An Attitudinal Approach

YWS: A Preliminary Assessment

17. Occupational Pensions as a Constraint to Mobility
Apprentice Training Support*

The Changing Face of Sick Pay: Self-certification*
Housing Constraints in a Growing Labour Market*

18. Jobsharing

Employment of Disabled Persons

19. YTS Survey

20. Growing Firms

21. YTS Follow-up Survey

22. YTS Final Report

23. Gatwick Airport and the Labour Market*

Selection Criteria: Matching Young People to Jobs in the 1980s

IMS Research into the Determinants of Wastage*

The Sponsorship of Engineering Graduates in the UK*

The Avon Labour Market for Computing Skills*

Skilled Manpower in Construction*

24. Early Retirement

25. New Technology and Employment in the Financial Services Sector: Past Impact and Future Prospects

26. Recruitment, Training and New Technology

27. Methods of Measuring Skill Shortages: Interim Report

28. Methods of Measuring Skill Shortages: Final Report

29. Retraining for Electronics*

Policy and Practice in Career Management*

Redundancy in the 1980s*

30. New Forms of Work Organisation

31. Temporary Working in Britain: Its Growth and Changing Rationales*

32. Flexibility in Firms

33. Access to Training and Jobs

34. Employers' Attitudes to the Long Term Unemployed

35. Patterns of Retirement

36. Employers' Attitudes to NAFE Providers

37. Employment Structures in Tourism and Leisure

38. Dividing Jobs: Employers' Attitudes to Job-Sharing and Job-Splitting

39. Relocation and Recruitment Difficulties of Employers in the South East

40. Employer Involvement in Adult Training Initiatives

41. Flexibility & Skill in Manufacturing Establishments

42. Corporate Employment Policies for Europe

43. Retaining Women Employees: Measures to Counteract Labour Shortage

44. The Employment and Utilisation of Older Workers

45. Regional Variation in the Development of Youth Training

46. Recruitment Procedures and Job Search Behaviour

47. Pay Pressures in the Private Sector: Managerial Strategies

48. Literacy and Less Skilled Jobs

49. Foreign Language Needs of Business

50. Re-deployment of ex-Service Staff

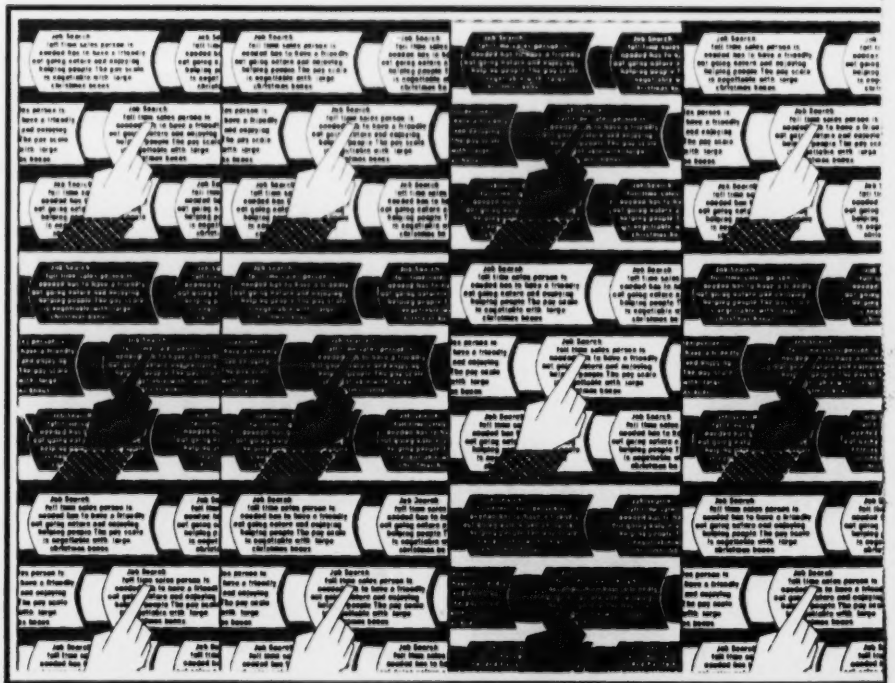
51. Careers Service

52. Barriers to Returning to Work

53. Young Workers

54. Employing Disabled Personnel

*These reports were derived from Institute research conducted outside the Commentary remit.



INSTITUTE OF MANPOWER STUDIES

at the University of Sussex

Mantell Building
Falmer
Brighton BN1 9RF
UK

Tel. 0273 686751
Fax 0273 690430